

MOSQUE IN ISLAM

اسلام کا نظام مساجد

MOHAMMAD ZAFEERUDDIN
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PUBLISHER'S WORD

We at Idara Talifat-e-Ashrafia have always been striving hard to present moderate Islamic Literature for you in an easy to read English format especially for our foreign readers from all over the world. The current book in your hand is yet another humble effort from us to give you a clear concept of what its subject really means. We hope that you would really like the effort made in all aspects from translation to printing as we have taken utmost care to retain the real theme of the book. Your suggestions regarding errors and omissions in the book are most welcomed, as always!

Muhammad Ishaq

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SYSTEM OF MOSQUES

Mosques occupy a significant position in Islam since the period of Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him). Wherever Muslims settle down, they first of all construct a mosque. It is an indicator which shows that the area is populated by Muslims.

As is well known when the holy Prophet (PBUH) halted for some days at Qaba on way to Madinah Munawwarah while migrating from Makkah Mukarramah, he himself laid the foundation of a mosque there and along with his companions (*Sahaba Karam*) got it built. Afterwards he entered into Madinah Munawwarah and there he also kept it on priority. A piece of land was purchased for this purpose and a mosque was built upon it. It was the place wherein the holy companions used to offer the five-time prayers under the stewardship of the holy Prophet (PBUH) besides settling other issues. The holy Prophet (PBUH) established here an educational institution known as 'Suffa' for the teaching and training of his companions. It shows the important role of mosques in Islam.

It is evident that the number of mosques continued to grow with the spread of Muslims in different parts of the globe. That is why it is termed as a *sha'r* (culture) in Islam.

Keeping in view the importance of mosque in Islam, it was essential that a book is written upon its system covering all the aspects in the light of Quran, Sunnah and history.

This humble servant of Islam as suggested by some senior Islamic scholars moved in this direction forty-five years ago and wrote a book '*Nizam-e-Masajid*' in Urdu. The book was very much liked in the Muslim circles and its several editions were brought out. Since then it was being felt that its English edition should also come out. *Alhamdulillah*, this long felt desire was fulfilled by Janab Zaheerun Nabi. He rendered it into fluent English.

I hope the English edition of the book would reach a large section of people and be helpful in understanding the importance and significance of mosque in Islam. May Allah accept this humble effort.

*Mohammad Zafiruddin, Mufti, Darul Uloom, Deoband
12 Ramzanul Mubarak, 1415 AH*

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FOREWORD

Mosques are primarily the 'houses which God hath permitted to be raised to honour; for the celebration in them, of His name : in them is He glorified in the mornings and the evenings' (Q. 24:36). This verse, preceded by one in the *Surat-un-Nur*, which gives an allegorical description of Allah as a Glorious, Illimitable Light and which cannot be adequately expressed or measured, has been taken by the commentators to refer to the Ka'ba or the Mosques in Madinah or Jerusalem but all mosques in the world are, in a way, extension of these holy mosques in so far as they serve the purpose of place of prayer. These are the places where believers assemble for prayer as they did behind the Prophet in his mosque in Madina, where he delivered his addresses, which contained not only appeals for obedience to God but also regulations affecting the religious, moral and social life of the community; from where he controlled the religious and political community of Islam. Like the *Dar-an-Nadwa* which once served as the place for taking all important decisions by the Quraish of Makkah, in the Prophet's mosque all matters crucial to the religious and social life of the Muslims were discussed and justice was administered. The mosques today dotting the entire Muslim world, can still serve the same purpose and become the nerve centres of the community life of the believers; they can also restore the unity of the Ummah by transcending all barriers of race, colour, nationality and language. I am glad that Maulana Zafeeruddin, the Mufti, Darul-Uloom, Deoband has given thought to these merits and significances of the mosque in this valuable work written in Urdu under the title of *Nizam-e-Masajid*. In it he has also touched upon the rules of *Shariah* in regard to all the different matters relating to the mosques which has made this work very comprehensive and useful.

Mr. Zaheer-un-Nabi has ably rendered the work into English which will enable the English-speaking Muslims whose number is increasing gradually, both in the East and West, to benefit from this valuable work of Maulana Zafeeruddin. May Allah recompense both the author and the translator of this work with His choicest rewards for their estimable labour in the cause of His religion.

Lucknow

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

July 3, 1991

INTRODUCTION

"Nizam-e-Masajid" is a thought provoking book which should prompt the readers to performance of the virtuous deeds (indicated in the book). People of every community all over the world are obsessed with the idea that they must do something for themselves, for their upliftment. Muslims too have their share of this 'Obsession'. I call it an obsession in case of Muslims because they already have what others are trying to find out. Muslims do not have to explore the venues and resources for their schemes of upliftment. They have only to pay attention to the wealth that is theirs and put it to the best use.

It is no exaggeration to say that in terms of monetary value, this wealth amounts to billions of rupees. They do not have to collect this amount. It has already been contributed by Muslims and invested soundly with assured returns. Look at the countless mosques spread all over the vast lands in Asia, Africa and some parts of Europe. These include the magnificent mosques like Jama Masjid of Delhi, the Jama Masjid of Ahmad-bin-Toulun, the Jama Masjid of Damascus and the Masjid of Al-Azhar and many others. There are still other mosques, varying in dimensions and grandeur in cities, towns and villages and on the wayside; and yet countless others which are simple in structure and small in dimensions. The sum total spent on the construction of these mosques may well be estimated to exceed billions of rupees. There are lands around almost all these mosques and other endowments which have been donated by Muslims by way of Waqf which are worth billions of rupees. All these can be utilized for the expansion of mosques and for various other purposes. For example, these can be utilized for the establishment and expansion of schools, boarding houses for the students, travellers' inns or hostels and hospitals, for the offices and courts of the Qazis (Darul Qaza) where disputes may be resolved by mutual settlement by way of panchayats.

The special type of a building which is called 'The Mosque' is indeed an order or chain of nerve centres of Muslim society, founded by the holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The first mosque which was built in Madinah Munawwarah was the place of worship five times a day as enjoined by God. On the premises of this mosque the school of *Suffa* (those select people who had exclusively devoted themselves to learning the teachings of Islam) was also located. In an adjoining place (in a portion of the mosque) the travellers (visiting on missions to Madinah) were lodged. Tents were set up on these premises for the wounded (those wounded in the excursions).

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Disputes were also settled here. Thus a model was already set up in this first mosque for all the various functions which have to be performed by us on the premises of these mosque (and which may be funded and financed from the endowments donated to these mosques). In the days of the second Caliph Omar a place was also reserved adjoining the mosque where people could hold poetic gatherings and literary discussions. In the Islamic countries mosques have been built almost at every few miles. Considerable lands around the mosques have been normally acquired for their expansion. What is needed now is to take up the works which were done in the first mosque. .

Maulana Zafeeruddin*, Principal of the Darul Uloom Mueenia Saniha (Bihar) has described in this book the immense wealth that the Muslims have in their possession and has counselled them to make proper use of it. God may bless him for this service. He has also pointed out the faults and defaults of the Muslims in maintaining the sanctity and dignity of the mosques, mostly on account of ignorance and negligence. Maulana Sahib has presented in this book valuable instructions on the subject collected from authentic traditions of the holy Prophet and from the standard works of *Fiqh*. A Syrian scholar, Jamaluddin Al-Qasmi's book in Arabic was a standard work on the subject so far. But I think Maulana Zafeeruddin's book has excelled it in the scope and extent of the discussion on the various topics.

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CHAPTER ONE

FIRST TWO MOSQUES ON EARTH

MASJID-AL-HARAM

God sent Adam from heaven to earth when He willed it that earth be inhabited by the children of Adam, His laws should prevail amongst them and they be reminded of the Trust which had been undertaken by them in eternity.

"We did indeed Offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they declined to undertake it, being afraid thereof; but Man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish."

(Al-Qur'an S-XXXIII. 72.)

The rationale of this event was announced, in the words of the Quran, thus :

"I will create a vicegerent on earth." (Al-Qur'an II-30.)

When the angels enquired about the wisdom of this action they were silenced by the words :

"I know what ye do not know." (Al-Qur'an II-30.)

When Adam descended on earth it was the fittest time for unravelling the purpose of creation of Man. Adam desired that there be a House which may resound with the praises of God, with prayers and obeisance. God fulfilled his wishes and sent down archangel Gabriel to guide and help Adam in laying the foundations of the Masjid-al-Haram or Baitullah (the House of God) at Makkah. This is the first ever house of the world and the first mosque too. God himself confirms it in the Qur'an :

"The first House (of worship) appointed for man was at Bakka: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings."

(Al-Qur'an III-96.)

This first house of prayer in the world is the venue of blessings, mundane as well as spiritual, and the centre of religious and moral education. For Muslims it is the Ka'ba and *Qibla* (focal point). Muslims from all over the world visit for pilgrimage and gather in large numbers in the month of *Zilhijja* every year.

MASJID-AL-AQSA

Abu Zar (may God be pleased with him) says : "I asked the holy Prophet, 'O Appostle of God : which is the first mosque on earth ?' The holy Prophet (peace be upon him) answered, 'The Masjid-al-Haram.' I asked, 'And which one thereafter ?' The holy Prophet said, 'The Masjid-al-Aqsa.' When Abu Zar asked what was the distance of time between the two, the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, 'A distance of forty years' (i.e. the Masjid-al-Aqsa was built forty years after the construction of Masjid-al-Haram). And then the holy Prophet added that for him the entire earth was a masjid. The inference is that it is permissible for Muslims to say Salat (perform the prayers) at any place on earth which is clean.

An Academic Discussion

It is commonly believed that Ibrahim built the Masjid-al-Haram and Sulaiman built the Masjid-al-Aqsa. There is a distance of one thousand years between the times of the two prophets. How then could the Tradition be correct describing the distance of forty years between the construction of the two mosques ? Commentators have tried to resolve this discrepancy in the following manner : The Masjid-al-Haram was in fact, first built by Adam (peace be on him). It was lifted up out of sight of human beings during Nooh flood, and it remained like that, invisible to human eyes, until Ibrahim built it again. Abraham's son, Ismail was with him in the task of construction. The Quran says :

"And remember Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundation of the House (with this prayer)" (Al-Qur'an II-127.)

"Behold ! we gave the site to Ibrahim, of the (sacred) house, (saying)" Associate not any thing (in worship) with Me." (Al-Qur'an XXII-26.)

Similarly, the Masjid-al-Aqsa was also built by Adam and not by Sulaiman. Scholars say that after Adam had completed construction of Ka'ba he was directed by God to go to Jerusalem. During the period of his visit there he built the Masjid-al-Aqsa also. Sulaiman (peace be upon

him) only rebuilt it. Thus, both the mosques were built first by Adam (peace be upon him) and a period of forty years intervened between the construction of the two mosques.

Quran also testifies to the antiquity of Masjid-al-Haram, describing the event when Ibrahim left his son Ismail, an infant then, in the barren land and uttered the following supplication :

“O’ our Lord ! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by the sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular prayer : fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with Fruits: So that they may give thanks.” (Al-Qur’an IX-37.)

“By the sacred House” clearly indicates that the traces of Masjid-al-Haram already existed at the time when Ismail was only a baby in the lap of his mother. The walls of the Masjid-al-Haram were raised by the father and son together long afterwards when Ismail had grown up.

Hafiz Ibn-al-Qayyim has explained the time lag of forty years in another way. According to him, contrary to popular belief, the Masjid-al-Aqsa was built by Ya’qoob (Yaqub, peace be upon him). Ya’qoob built it forty years after Ibrahim had constructed the Masjid-al-Haram.

The writer of these lines (The author himself) thinks that the first explanation is more convincing : Ibrahim was not the first builder of the Masjid-al-Haram but he only rebuilt it like Sulaiman, who rebuilt Masjid-al-Aqsa, and both mosques were originally built by Adam at an interval of forty years.

Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi (may God be pleased with him) has written on the subject that :

“It is an established fact that the foundation of the exalted House (Baitullah) was laid during the life-time of Adam. Thereafter it remained the place of worship for many prophets and pious men and a centre known for efficacy of prayer. When Adam was sent down from heaven to earth he prayed to God for a house on earth like the one in heaven which may resound with His praises. God granted his prayer and indicated the site of the House on which the foundation was laid. This House stood aloft until it was lifted above the earth during Nooh’s flood. But its traces remained and people turned to this centre for efficacy of their prayers. At long last Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was directed to build the House

again. When he decided to build the House, calm and tranquility prevailed in the atmosphere and the archangel Gabriel indicated the exact location of the sanctuary. Ibrahim dug the land along the indicated lines and discovered the foundations that were laid by Adam (peace be on him). He rebuilt the house on those foundations."

Thus we see that the *Ka'ba* or *Masjid-al-Haram* was built soon after the descent of Adam on earth and that God Himself indicated the site of this mosque and that it became the centre of devotion from the very first day of its construction.

One Tradition says that, unlike other things, this mosque and other mosques shall not perish on the day of Judgment but shall be collected together.

"On the day of Judgment all earth would perish except mosques and then mosques would be brought together."

It transpires from this Tradition that mosques will have a distinguished position and will not perish on the day of Judgment like other things. But it does not make it clear as to what will happen to them.

Read with another Tradition it becomes clear that the mosques, which will not perish, will be shifted to heavens above..

In this background the readers can well understand the importance and pivotal position of mosques and the organisation comprising the chain of mosques spread all over the world. We have called this chain of mosques the Order of the Mosques (*Islam Ka Nizam-e-Masajid*).

CHAPTER TWO

THE MOSQUES OF THE PROPHET'S TIME

The early days of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), after he proclaimed his prophethood, were full of hardship, harassment and torture by the people of Quraish. Construction of a mosque at Makkah under those circumstances was out of the question. Moreover, the Masjid-al-Haram was already there and the faithful could visit it for peace and solace. Those few persons who had embraced Islam performed prayers in seclusion and hiding. Sometimes the Prophet would be visiting a companion's house, when other companions also assembled there. The Prophet would give them lessons in Islam and would also say *Salat*. No special arrangements were made for congregational prayers. At the time of prayer they performed it wherever they happened to be and as best they could. Abdullah-bin-Abbas says, "Before the construction of the mosque the Prophet used to say *Salat* wherever he was at the time of prayer. Some companions, however, had fixed special places in their houses where they performed prayers of *Tahajjud* and supplementary prayers and concentrated on devotional supplications to God for His forgiveness and blessings. These places could be technically called Masjid-al-Bait, mosques of the house, in the terminology of *Fiqh*. Some commentators of Hadith have treated these places as (regular) mosques.

The first such mosque was built at Quba when the prophet (peace be upon him) reached there on his way while migrating from Makkah to Madinah. This is about 3 miles from Madina. The first brick of its foundation was laid by the Prophet (peace be on him), the second by Abu Bakr, the next by Omar and then by other companions. The Prophet and his companions worked as masons as well as ordinary labourers to build this mosque with devotion and dedication. On completion this mosque acquired the blessings of God so much so that it has been mentioned in the holy Qur'an in these words :

"There is a mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety; it is more worthy of the standing forth (for prayer) therein. In it are men who love to be purified; and God loveth those who make themselves pure."
(Al-Qur'an IX-108.)

The Prophet (peace be on him) was so much attached to it that he visited it on every Saturday and performed two rak'at of *Salat*. His companions also followed the practice. Omar (may God be pleased with him) made it a practice to visit this mosque twice a week and personally rendered whatever service was required, for example dusting and cleaning the walls and the floors.

After a few days' stay at Quba, the Prophet proceeded to Madinah. The first act of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Madina was the construction of a mosque which is called the Prophet's mosque at the spot where the Prophet's camel had halted. All Madinites were vying with each other in the reception of the Prophet and each one wanted that the Prophet should stay at his house. To resolve that competition without any heart-burning the Prophet (peace be upon him) decided to let loose the reins of his camel and alighted where the camel halted. The spot where the camel halted was a plot of land belonging to two orphan children. As the Prophet expressed the desire to have the land, the orphans presented it to him as a gift, but the Prophet would not agree to accept it except on payment of a price. So it was purchased on a reasonable price. The payment of the price was made by Abu Bakar. There the Prophet laid the foundation stone of the Prophet's mosque. His companions carried the bricks and worked as labourers as well as masons while singing with joy "peace and well being is really that which is destined in the next world. O, God bless the migrants and their local helpers." Thus the builders of this mosque also were the great preachers and pillars of Islam. The mosque which these great men of faith built was devoid of all pomp and show. There were no paintings or carvings, no chandellers, no glittering stones. It was a simple structure with walls of mud bricks, pillars made of date tree trunks and roof also made of date leaves.

The construction of these mosques at the very beginning indicates to the faithful that wherever they are in a position to do so their first act should be to build a mosque for offering prayers and they should treat the mosques as nerve centres of their social structure. These also serve as an example in simplicity so that all Muslims, rich or poor, may be able to build the holy house of prayers in their localities.

This mosque was not merely a place of prayer. It was an impregnable

fort of faith. Laws were made here. The Muslim army was given training. This was the camp from where armies were despatched to war fronts. Delegations from foreign tribes and countries were received here. The first school or University of Islamic learning was located here. The Prophet (peace be on him) held his court here, and heard and decided disputes. And the transgressors were kept in confinement there. Thus, it was the Parliament House, the University, The Army Headquarters and the Prison House all at the same time. And, besides, it was, that holy place which is called "a part from the garden of heaven." Some scholars take this saying of the Prophet to mean that this spot was literally brought from heaven in its geographical and physical form like the black stone which is said to have been brought from heaven.

At another place the Prophet (peace be on him) says, "A prayer performed in this (my) mosque is a thousand times more rewarding than that performed in other mosques, except the Masjid-al-Haram."

THE MOSQUES AT MAKKAH AND MADINAH

Scholars differ among themselves on the priority of the one over the other between the two mosques - The Masjid-al-Haram and the Prophet's mosque or rather between Makkah and Madinah. It is however not wise for us to enter into a disputation like this. The exalted position of both the places is an admitted fact. The one town has the privilege of being the place of birth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), a place where he spent his youth and was ordained as God's Messenger while the other was the centre of his activities in spreading the religion and a spring board for conquests. The Prophet's mosque holds eternally the body of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) while the Masjid-al-Haram is the focal point and the center of pilgrimage for men from all over the world. The Qur'an mentions it at several places as the holy place for guidance of the world. Both places are sources of blessings for us. God may grant us opportunity to visit these.

The Hanafi scholars place the priorities as follows :

"The Masjid-al-Haram at Makkah, then the Prophet's mosque at Madinah, then the mosque at Jerusalem and then the mosque at Quba."

Three mosques, the Masjid-al-Haram, the Prophet's mosque at Madinah and the Masjid-al-Aqsa at Jerusalem have an exalted position in view of their historical position and religious sanctity. No other mosque has such exalted position as these. It is permitted or rather desirable to

undertake a journey to these places with in the belief that God will reward it. But a journey specially to visit any other mosque in the belief that one would earn a special reward (any more than his attendance at the local mosque) is not permitted. The Prophet (peace be on him) has said, "Do not saddle your camel but for three mosques — Masjid-al-Haram, Masjid-al-Aqsa and this, my mosque."

Undertaking a journey to other places in the ordinary course, or on some errand, for example, for trade or commerce, sight seeing or for studies, is a different matter and there is no harm in such travels. One is free to visit and see those places. But he should not have a false notion that a visit to, say, Jama Masjid of Delhi would get him half as much reward as that of a Haj pilgrimage or that a visit to the Shrine at Ajmer would get him as much reward as a Haj pilgrimage.

Shah Waliullah has pointed out the rationale behind this probitory order.

During the days of ignorance people used to undertake pilgrimage to places which they, in their blind faith, considered holy. This led to distortion of the faith and people started worshipping others than the one God. The holy Prophet plugged the sources of such a distortion so that such excursions do not serve as a step towards the worship of any other than the one God.

CHAPTER THREE

MOSQUE IN ISLAM

The mosques differ from one another in status. Even the three most important mosques are different from each other in status.

The *hadith* compilation of Ibn-Majah records a Tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that "the compulsory salat performed at home earns a single reward while it earns twenty-five times reward if performed in the mosque of the locality; the Friday noon prayers performed in the Jama Masjid earn reward equal to five hundred prayers and a prayer performed in Masjid-al-Aqsa equal to fifty thousand prayers; and fifty thousand times of this when performed in my mosque and one lakh times when performed in Masjid-al-Haram."

The scholars of *Fiqh* have determined the rewardwise status of the mosque of Quba as next after the mosque of Aqsa and then the Jama Masjid of the town, then the mosque of the locality and then the mosque on the wayside. The regular daily prayers of five times should be performed at the mosque of the locality in preference to the Jama Masjid just as the priority for Friday noon prayers is for prayers at the Jama Masjid. The Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the pious men of the past always performed all the daily prayers five times a day in the mosque of their locality. Pious men follow this practice even today.

These preferences and status of merit to the various mosque is not just arbitrary; it is based on sound reason. The Masjid-al-Haram in Makkah has the highest place amongst the mosques of the world for reasons discussed in the fore-going pages. The reward for Haj pilgrimage and prayers performed at the Masjid-al-Haram is many times more than for prayers performed at any other place. People are therefore keen to perform the pilgrimage and visit the holy mosque, the exalted house of God during the days of Haj. Blessed are those who are able to visit Makkah to perform Haj and say their prayers there. Angels pray for God's blessings on the

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pilgrims. The whole atmosphere is elevating and blissful. History comes alive. This is the birth place of the holy Prophet (peace be on him), here did he spend his childhood and grew up, here was he ordained as an Apostle of God; and then the hard struggle, hardship and persecution that he suffered for the sake of his faith; then he was forced to migrate from here and ultimately returned to it triumphantly in glory. This is the central place for the Muslims of the world and here is the black stone fixed in the house of God.

The Prophet's mosque is hallowed by similar considerations. It was built by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions with their own hands. This was the centre from where Islam spread throughout the world; it has the pride of place of having the Prophet's eternal resting place within its campus till the day of Judgment.

Similarly the Masjid-al-Aqsa is a distinguished mosque because it was the Qibla (focal point at prayers) for Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) for a long time. It was the Qibla for other prophets before him. Many reversed apostles of God are buried on its campus. The Prophet (peace be on him) visited this mosque on his way to heaven during the celestial journey, the '*Mi'rag*'. It has a special place of distinction among great mosques.

The Masjid-e-Quba has a pride of place of its own. This was the first mosque built by the Prophet and its hallowed precincts first resounded with the recitation of the Qur'an. After these great mosques comes the place of the Jama Masjid, which has the premier position in each town. Here the Muslims of the town gather in large numbers once every week. Then come the mosques of the locality which resound with prayers five times every day and are blessed and hallowed. This way side mosque comes last because the arrangements for prayer are not so regular there and the congregation is not so large as in the mosque of the locality.

NATURAL ORDER OF MOSQUES

Prayer can be performed individually; supererogatory prayers are indeed performed individually. For the *FARDH* (compulsory) prayer God in His all compassing wisdom decided that it should be performed with the congregation so that the faithful get together, be united and become a compact body. A complete system makes provision for bringing together the faithful at various stages.

"For ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace ye became brethren." (Al-Qur'an III-103.)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself laid the foundations of this system, gave it the final shape and ordered that it should be followed in every locality where Muslims live. This system is the *Nizam-e-Masajid*, or the Order of the mosques. It is based on a solid ground and provides for a gradual development of the individual as part of a progressively expanding polity. The people of the locality or a village assemble at the mosque five times a day throughout the week and offer prayers. The timing for the prayer are fixed and every one observes it with punctuality. It is worth noticing that lack of punctuality is a common feature of social and political gatherings but those very people who are late in attending social and political meetings are punctual, as they have to be, at the prayers in the mosques.

Man seeks companions and comrades in all walks of life. He cannot do every thing all alone, by himself. In the performance of his religious duties also he needs company of the faithful so that he may stand with them in prayer and carry out other duties enjoined by religion. Collective strength is required for defending the faith and specially for fighting the perennial enemy of man, the *Satan* and his progeny, who are always on the look out for catching the progeny of *Adam* off their guard and at moments of weakness.

The congregation at prayers should not be a matter of appearances only. It should not be just a group of men collected together but a real unity of mind and spirit. The inner self should be as pure and clear as is the body; the mind should be in tune, as the body should be in line, with the fellow members of the congregation.

Islam found such an institution in the form of the mosque. A special place is provided for congregational prayer and it is called the mosque. It is not any individual's property; it is neither owned nor possessed by any individual. It is God's house and all Muslims are equally entitled to visit it. Five times every day are fixed for all the Muslims to assemble in their respective mosques and stand shoulder to shoulder behind one leader (*Imam*) and perform the prayers. They follow the Imam and stand, bow, prostrate or sit as he does, following him but not in advance of him nor at variance with his movements. They follow him as one man, be they rich or poor, master or slave; all stand in the audience of the Great King of Kings. They feel that they are in the presence of God and He is watching them even if they are not able to see Him with their untrained eyes.

After the daily congregations in the localities, on the seventh day Muslims from all these localities assemble at the Jama Masjid of the town for Jum'a prayers. All roads lead to Jama Masjid that day. Muslims well groomed and refreshed with bath, donning their best clothes come to Jama Masjid from all corners of the city. The gathering is large and filled with a spirit of piety and devotion to God. Men are busy uttering words of His praise, reciting the Qur'an. The baser instincts of man, enmity, ill feeling, jealousy and hatred are subdued; love, faith and brotherhood pervades the atmosphere. The mind is sharpened with the sermon of Imam, the attentive minds absorbing the spirit of the Imam's address, their minds filled with fear of God and of the day of Judgment which are the themes of the address. Then the entire congregation stand as one man behind the Imam and follow him throughout the prayer, bowing and prostrating with him. Men from all walks of life and all strata of society assemble here. Among them are leading businessmen, scholars, the rich and the poor. Thoughts of the rich and leading businessmen go to the economic and financial condition of the Muslims. The learned think of their educational and religious development and the pious people think of purifying the heart. The poor get a lesson for working hard. Every one is benefitted by the gathering.

"O ye who believe, when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (The Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic); that is best for you if ye but knew."
(Al-Qur'an LXII-9.)

This weekly gathering has been of great benefit to the Muslims throughout the ages.

Two days in an year are even more distinguished, and special gatherings are held on these days. Men of the faith from all corners of the city and from the neighbourhood assemble in an open place called *Idgah* and offer prayers, happy and jubilant, dressed in their best clothes. A festive mood pervades the atmosphere; every one is cheerful and gay and yet all men bow and prostrate on the call of the Imam. Even the poor and needy have a share of this happiness because the rich and the well to do have distributed *Sadaqa* and *Fitra*, among them. The prayers on two occasions in a year — the Idul Fitre and Idul Adha are performed at *Idgah* which is a part of the chain of mosques.

Then at the centre of the world, at the Masjid-al-Haram at Makkah, Muslims from all over the world converge on the occasion of Haj pilgrimage. There are men and women from many nations speaking different languages, distinguished from each other in their language and

appearance, features and complexion but donning the same dress and engrossed in the devoted pursuit of their goal, unmindful of all worldly comforts. Every one has unstitched cloth wrapped around him, his head is bare. They are all singing praises of God and they are all full of reverence for the holy place, nobody even thinks of cutting a blade of grass or killing a bird or even a lice.

This world assembly of all the Muslims at the Masjid-al-Haram is the culmination of the blissful order of mosques : the congregation of a locality five times a days, the weekly congregation of the whole city at Jama Masjid, on Fridays, the annual congregation on the Id days at Idgah and the world assembly at Masjid-al-Haram. The Qur'an says about the Masjid-al-Haram:

"Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety."
(Al-Qur'an II-125.)

"And proclaim the pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee of foot and (mounted on every kind of camel, lean on account of journey through deep and distant mountain highways."
(Al-Qur'an XXII-27).

No political system or organisation can excel the organisation of mosques in its effectiveness, in collecting and uniting a huge mass of humanity and turning them into active and dedicated bondmen in the service of God and His creation. It caters both to the material and spiritual needs of men. When this system is strengthened the Muslims will find that a religious fervor is generated and their worldly affairs are also smoothly conducted. This will infuse the spirit of development and progress, generate the invisible strength which arises from unity, make the *Millat* united and strong and give them political power too. It will root out the cause of all ills. It will train Muslims in the art of living at the will of God and God alone.

This system, when organised according to the rules of Islamic Law, creates discipline, mutual sympathy, purity of heart and cleanliness of the body, habits of punctuality and other necessary requisites for progress in all walks of life.

The far reaching effect which this system makes on the lives of men cannot be accomplished by any association, party or conference organised by men. Any organisation established by men cannot be so comprehensive as the one directed by God.

The holy Qur'an says that the purpose of the creation of man is prayer to God.

"I have created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me."
(Al-Qur'an LI-56).

Islam has made it clear that prayer (salat) which is the content of the system of mosques concerns all alike; it does not recognise any distinctions of caste and tribe, of rich and poor.

Lessons in strict discipline, following the Imam and performing the prayer in the congregation behind him, following the movements after him, is the essence of this organisation. An army is given training in discipline, in following and obeying the commander, in rallying on the sound of the bugle. Huge amounts of money are spent on such a training. The organisation of the mosques ensures the obedience and following of the Imam. A Muslim gets used to it from the age of ten years and adheres to it till his death. It becomes his habit. There is no break or holiday on any day. The call to prayer is given in words which are full of dignity and praise of God, they proclaim faith and hope for prosperity.

We have neglected this organisation and are therefore deprived of the benefits that flow from it. In the days of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and of the first four Caliphs (may God be pleased with them), when this system was followed with religious fervor, the community of the faithful prospered and flourished, their domains expanded. In those days mosques were the centre of activity and the pulpit served as a throne. The policy statements of the Caliphs (may God be pleased with them) were made from the pulpit and many issues were settled in the mosques. The Caliph himself led the congregational prayer at the capital of the Caliphate. Caliph Omar (may God be pleased with him) met his death at the hands of an assassin while he was going to lead the congregational prayer.

In the provincial headquarters where governors lived, it was a part of the duties of a governor to lead the congregational prayers. They also led the Friday and Id prayers. This arrangement continued up the Abbasid period. Even the non-Muslims, those who were otherwise critical of Islam, admired this system and the organisation of mosques.

THE SYSTEM OF CONGREGATION IS NATURAL

Let us now consider in detail the wisdom and purpose of this natural order of congregations at different levels and how God has combined in this system the secret of worldly prosperity and spiritual blessings.

God ordained the order of the mosques so that discord and dissension among Muslims may be removed and the Muslims may stand before God as one man, as if precious pearls were knit together. Thus standing together they would sing praises of God and offer prayers repeating their supplications five times a day.

"Praise be to God, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek.

Show us the straight way. Thy way of those men whom you have graced and not those whose (portion) is wrath and who go as try."
(Al-Qur'an I.)

Salat is an important pillar of Islam. Its importance may be understood by the fact that among the five pillar of Islam it is next only to 'faith in One God'. The congregational prayers reflect that faith in the One God.

The verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the holy Prophet make it clear that congregational prayer is the true form of prayer stressed upon again and again to be performed in mosques. The *Shariah* has given a central place to mosques in the set-up of a Muslim society. Some of these verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet are cited here :

"And that ye set your whole selves (to Him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your devotion sincere as in His sight."
(Al-Qur'an VII-29.)

The author of *Tafseere-e-Ahmadi* in his comments on this verses says :— This verse proves that *Qayam* (to stand with face forward) is compulsory in Salat and also that Salat should be performed in the mosques — of course any particular mosque is not referred.

Abu Bakr Hassas says : Another thing proved (by this verse) is that Salat should be performed in the mosque which amounts to say that it is compulsory to perform the compulsory Salat with the congregation because the mosques are built for congregational prayers.

Another verse of the Qur'an is eloquent in this connections :—

"(Lit is such a Light) in houses, which God Hath permitted to be raised to honour, for the celebration, in them, of His name; in them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again), by men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the remembrance of God, nor from regular prayer, nor from the practice of regular charity."
(Al-Qur'an XXIV-36-37.)

The style and trend of this verse indicates that it is the rightful due of the mosques that *salat* and other prayers should be said there. 'House' in this verse refers to the mosque. 'Abdullah bin Masud' (God be pleased with him) narrates that he noticed that some men in the market left every thing as it was as soon as they heard the call for prayer. At this sight he recollected the Qur'anic verse and said that it is for men like these that the Qur'an says :—

"..... men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the remembrance of God, nor from regular prayer, nor from the practice of regular charity."

There are many sayings of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in this connection which show that *Salat* should be said only in mosque. Abdullah-bin-Masud (may God be pleased with him) is quoted in the compilation of Traditions by *Muslim* as saying :—

"The Prophet (peace be on him) taught us the path of right guidance. And one of the things he taught us was that *Salat* should be performed in a mosque where *Azan* is called (on the given at time of prayer). If you perform *Salat* in your house, like the hypocrites, you indeed deviate from the path shown by the Prophet; and when you give up the path shown by the Prophet, take it for granted that you are doomed."

In another saying the Prophet is reported to have said :— "A man's *Salat* performed with the congregation is twenty five times more rewarding than the *Salat* performed at home or in the market place and this is so because for performing the *Salat* with the congregation he performs ablution and then proceeds to the mosque."

'Proceeded to the mosque' clearly indicates that congregational prayers is to be performed in the mosque only. Ibn Hajar says :— This saying of the holy Prophet means that *Salat* performed with the congregation in the mosque is more rewarding than the *Salat* performed (even with a congregation) at home or in the bazar. He further sums up that the many times high reward mentioned here is specially connected with congregational prayer performed in the mosques. "Imam Bukhari says in connection with congregational prayers : Whenever Aswad missed the congregational prayer in his mosque, he always repaired to another mosque (to join the congregation there). Anas once reached a mosque when the congregational prayer was over. He again called the *Azan* and *Aqamat* and performed prayer with the congregation of men (who had missed, like him, the principal congregation).

These elucidations also show that congregational prayer is closely connected with the mosque and that is why Aswad used to go to another mosque when he missed the congregation in his own mosque. He did not think of arranging a second congregational prayer at home. In this connection Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajar Asqalani says :—

What I understand is that by describing the examples of Aswad and Hadhrat Anas, Imam Bukhari was trying to point out the desirability and high rewards of congregational prayers performed in a mosque. If it were not so, Aswad would have collected a congregation at home and would not have gone to another mosque in pursuit of joining a congregation there nor would Anas have gone to the mosques instead of forming a congregational prayer at home.

These observations make it abundantly clear that congregational prayer is required to be performed in the mosque. Congregation arranged for prayer at home is no substitute for the congregational prayer in the mosque.

Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajar says in connection with another Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) :— “The real purpose of the congregation prayer is that it should be performed in the mosque.” Shaikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi says :— “It is incumbent (Wajib) on a person of sound mind who is not otherwise physically disabled that he should attend the mosque for congregational prayer.”

Hafiz Ibn-e-Qayyim says that it is compulsory *Fardh* to attend the mosque for congregational prayers if there is no valid reason for absence. However, when there is a valid reason for absence the attendance in the mosque is exempted. He says : “Those who have studied the Traditions of the Prophet must have understood that saying *Salat* with the congregation in the mosque is compulsory except when there is some valid reason to exempt a person from performing the Friday prayer and congregational prayer in a mosque. Otherwise not attending the mosque for congregational prayer is as sinful as (deliberately) missing the congregational prayers altogether.” The trend of several sayings of the Prophet led him to form this opinion. It may be noted that he has declared congregational prayers to be compulsory because he was the follower of Imam Hanbal (i.e. the other schools do not go to the extent of declaring attendance at the mosque to be compulsory). In any case there is no dispute as to its being necessary and important.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) was very particular about saying *Salat* with the congregation in the mosque and expressed great displeasure against those who did not attend the mosque. The Prophet's companions also followed the same practice.

Hafiz Ibn-Qayyim writes : "It was the holy Prophet's custom that he performed the compulsory prayers in the mosque except when some compelling reason prevented him from attending the mosques e.g. during a journey or on account of serious illness."

On the day of Judgment when men will be assembled for the highest reward i.e. the privilege of audience before God, those who attended the mosque regularly to perform the congregational prayer will have a pride of place.

The companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were very enthusiastic about their conduct and activities in pursuance of the dictates of the Qur'an and the Prophet (peace be upon him). The importance attached by them to the attendance of mosque may be seen from the following episode : Hazrat Atab bin Aseer was the Governor of Makkah when the news of the death of the Prophet (peace be on him) reached him. He was so terrified that he went into hiding. At that time Suhail bin Amr addressed the people and when he was assured that the people of Makkah were firm in their faith he brought Atab out of hiding. In the course of the sermon he said :—

"O' men of Makkah, I tell you by God that if I get a report that some one of you did not attend the congregational prayer in the mosque deliberately I will behead him. The people of Makkah were grateful to him for this sermon and appreciated it."

In view of the great importance attached to it, the learned scholars have declared that congregational prayer in the mosque is one of the symbols of faith.

We have shown above the great importance of performing congregational prayers in the mosque. The importance of congregational prayers and the central place that the mosque occupies in the matter of prayers are evident from the verses of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him).

The Qur'an says :

"And offer prayers with others of the congregation."

(Al-Qur'an II).

Imam Baidhavi says, "The reward for congregational prayer is twenty seven times that of prayer performed individually because collective effort is involved in it."

Imam Razi says :— Another meaning of this verse is : Say the Salat with those who are performing prayers. With this interpretation of the verse

the reason for repetition (of the same thing which has been stated in the preceding verse) is satisfactorily explained. The preceding verse ordains prayers and this second verse ordains that prayer should be performed with the congregation.

Shah Abdul Aziz writes :—

"In short, congregational prayers at all the five (prescribed) times are incumbent on every Muslim as this was the regular practice (*Sunnat Muakkadah*) of holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and it cannot be waived except for some valid reason acceptable under the rules of *Shariah*, for example illness, journey, rain, storm or flood. It is a compulsory collective duty on all the Muslims i.e. if all the Muslims omit it deliberately (and no congregational prayers are performed at all in a locality) then all the Muslims (of the locality) will be jointly guilty of the omission, because this practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is fundamental to the religion :

"When thou (Q.Adsile) are with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, taking their arms with them." (Al-Qur'an IV-102.)

The author of Al-Taleeq Al-Sabieh writes :—

"The injunction for holding congregational prayers even under conditions of terror shows that it is all the more essential in times of peace." Ibn-e-Kathor in his commentary of the Qur'an says :-

"Those who interpret this verse as a declaration of the congregational prayer being compulsory have argued well."

"And we record that which they send before and that which they leave behind." (Al-Qur'an XXXVI-12.)

This refers to the track of steps taken while going to the mosque.

The scholars have quoted many other verses of the Qur'an to prove that congregational prayers are essential.

There are many Traditions and sayings of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) which show that congregational prayers are essential and earn much reward. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) has laid great emphasis on it.

Abu Hurairah has related that the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "By the Great One who has control over my life I feel like giving an order for piling up wood and then for calling the Azan. I would then depute some one to lead the prayers and myself I would go around and

whomsoever I find at home (not going to the mosque for congregational prayers) I would burn his house. There are people who would attend the mosque even for *Isha* prayers if only they came to know that they would get (there) a bone or even a pair of legs of an animal."

The target of the Prophets' curse are those who do not attend the mosque even though they may be performing prayers at home. The Tradition related in the compilation of Abu Daud makes it more clear :—

"I feel like telling the youngmen to pile up wood near me and then I would go to those who perform prayers at home without any valid excuse (for not attending the mosque) and burn them alongwith their houses."

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal writes in connection with these Traditions :

"If absence from the congregational prayers at the mosque were not a major sin the Prophet (peace be on him) would not have gone to the extent of giving the threat of burning their houses."

In the former Traditions the reference to the prayers of 'Isha' clearly shows that emphasis on the congregational prayers is for all five times prayers and not only for the Friday noon prayers as some people tend to think. In the compilation by *Muslim* there is another Tradition which makes the point crystal clear. It says :—

Abdullah Ibn Masud narrates, "Of course we know that none except a hypocrite or a seriously ill person abstains from the congregational prayer. Even those who are ill come to the mosque, with the help of other people, if need be." He also said that the Apostle of God showed us the path of guidance and one of the lesson taught by him is that prayers be performed in the mosque where call for prayers (*Azan*) is given.

In another Tradition it is related that the Apostle of God said, "One who desires that he may appear before God in a state of being Muslim he should attend the mosque as soon as call for prayer is given. Indeed God has ordained the path of righteousness for his Apostle and prayers (in the mosque) are among these righteous practices. If you perform prayer at home like hypocrites you have given up the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and if you have made a habit of giving up the Prophet's preachings then there is no doubt about your depravity. Any one who proceeds to the mosque with a pure mind and clean body God grants him elevation, a degree for each step taken towards the mosques and one sin is written off for each step. And we are sure that none except a hypocrite

avoids congregational prayers because a true man of faith does come to the mosque and joins the congregational prayer if he can, even if he has to take the help of others for coming to the mosque."

In another Tradition it is related that the holy Prophet would have indeed burnt to death such people who abstained from congregational prayers but for the pity for women and children.

It has also been said by the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) that God does not accept the prayers of those who hear the call for prayers and yet do not attend the mosque for congregational prayers, except when one has a valid excuse.

This is why the holy Prophet (peace be on him) and his companions were enthusiastic about the congregational prayers. They observed this practice and performed congregational prayers even in the midst of fierce fighting when men were getting killed all around on the battlefield.

Salim Ibn Abdullah narrates an episode from his father, Abdullah Ibn Umar : Abdullah related to him that he was accompanying the Prophet (peace be on him) on a crusade. Fighting started. In the meanwhile time came for prayer. The companions divided themselves in two groups. One group joined the Prophet in prayer and the other group continued fighting the enemy. When the first group completed one Rak'at with the Prophet they went over to fight the enemy and the second group came to join the Prophet for one Rak'at. The Prophet completed his two Rak'ats, others performed one Rak'at later to complete their two Rak'ats.

The Arab infidels knew that the devoted Muslims hold prayers dearer than their own life and the lives of their wives and children. So they used to intensify their assaults at the times of prayers. But they were never successful. Abu Hurairah has described one episode : The Apostle of God halted between Dhajan and Asfan. The infidels said among themselves : "It is time for the Muslims to say their prayers which they hold dearer than the whole world and dearer than their wives and children, they call it *Asr* prayer. So let us launch attack on the Muslims with full force." While the infidels were thus conferring among themselves, angel Gabriel appeared before the Apostle of God and told him to divide his men into two groups and perform one *Rak'at Salat* with each group in a way that the other group meanwhile continues fighting the enemy. Thus each group would perform one Rak'at and the Prophet (peace be upon him) would complete his two Rak'ats.

Congregational prayers were not waived even in the midst of fierce fighting. At such a crucial time God sent Gabriel and guided the Prophet

(PBUH) to a practical wisdom and saved Muslims from defeat (without foregoing the congregational prayer). This is proof enough that God likes congregational prayer.

Abu Hurairah used to say that it was better for the children of Adam that molten lead is poured into their ears rather than that they hear the call for prayer and not attend the mosque for congregational prayer.

Abdullah Ibn Masud and Abu Musa Ashiri say that those who hear the call for prayer and yet do not attend the mosque for congregational prayers do not perform the prayer at all. Hazrat Ali was also of the same opinion.

Mujahid narrates that some one asked Abdullah Ibn Abbas what did he think of a man who observed fast during the day and performed superogatory prayers at night but did not attend the Friday noon prayer and other congregational prayers during the week days. He replied that "the man was doomed to hell". The man asked the same question the next day and continued asking the question every day for a month. Ibn Abbas kept replying "the man is doomed to hell."

Hazrat Aisha (God be pleased with her) says :—

"One who heard the call for prayer and did not respond (by attending the mosque) without any valid excuse is not destined to have a share in God's blessings and it seems he has no desire to earn God's pleasure."

In the sayings and Traditions of the holy Prophet (PBUH) narrated by several companions the importance and essentiality of congregational prayers has been stressed. The founders of the Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) have used the term as 'complete performance' for congregational prayers (and incomplete performance for individual prayers). By 'complete performance' they mean performance in the manner in which it was ordained and 'incomplete performance' is that which is at variance from the prescribed manner. They have contended that the first lesson in the process of prayer was given to the holy Prophet by Gabriel in the form of congregational prayer. It is so described in the Tirmizi and other compilations of the Traditions.

Most scholars of theology consider congregational prayers as essential (*Wajib*). Some others consider it an established rule because it was the practice of the Apostle of God (even though not ordained as compulsory). They have advanced forceful arguments for such opinions.

Ibn-al-Humam says :— "Congregational prayer is incumbent upon a person who is adult, free, of sound mind and has no valid excuse for absenting from the congregational prayer. If all times he misses the congregation inspite of his efforts, then it is not incumbent upon him that he should go about from one mosque to another to join a congregational prayer of that time. If he does so it is good and graceful. But it will be all right if he performs the prayer individually in the mosque of his locality." One may collect his family members and performs congregational prayer with them with a view to earning the high rewards for congregational prayer.

It may be asked that the congregational prayer being essential (*Wajib*) as stated in detail, how is it that the commentators and masters of Fiqh have called it a *Sunnah*. Ibn-al-Humam explains it thus :— "Congregational prayer is indeed *Wajib* (essential) but it has been called *Sunnah* because the proof of its being *Wajib* is based on *Sunnah*, as we are told by the Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him).

Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlvi writes : 'Sunane-Huda, the guiding practice means the path followed by all the faithful, or it may signify that the compulsory nature of congregational prayer as proved by the Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him).

Ibn-al-Humam also writes that if a man performs congregational prayers at home without any valid excuse for his absence from the mosque, this act ordinarily amounts to an (undesirable) innovation. But if he does it intentionally and deliberately he is liable to penalty. The sum and substance of the foregoing discussions is that congregational prayers fall in the category of essential (*Wajib*) performances. It follows that any body who does not attend the congregational prayer without a valid reason and is habitually absent, then his evidence is not acceptable. He may be beaten and put in jail. His neighbours owe it to him that they persuade him to attend the congregation in the mosque and do not overlook this default; otherwise they would themselves be guilty (of neglect of duty), in the eyes of *Shariah*.

This penalty is meant for cases wherein one or two persons are absenting from the congregation. But when a whole community or population of a town gives up congregational prayers, then it is warranted that the faithful take up arms against them because they are guilty of discarding a major symbol of religion. The author of *Al Tahrir al Mukhtar* writes : "When the whole population of a town gives up congregational prayers then the faithful should take up arms against them and when an individual is guilty of it then he should be beaten."

This pronouncement of the great jurists of Islam is based on sound reasons. It has already been stated in the fore-going pages that absenting from congregational prayers is considered an indication of hypocrisy. A man who does not attend the mosque even after hearing the call for prayer, his prayer (at home) is not to be taken as duly performed. The companions did not miss the congregation even in the face of great hurdles, hardship and difficulty. Someone explained his inability and asked the Prophet (PBUH) if it was permissible for him to miss the congregation. The Prophet's reply was in the negative.

Abu Hurairah says : "A blind man came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said that he did not find any one to lead him upto the mosque so he may be permitted to perform the prayers at home. The Prophet gave him the permission. As he was returning the Prophet called him back and asked him, "Do you hear the call for prayer ?" He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet then said, "Then you answer the call and come to the mosque."

A similar case is reported about the son of Umme Kulthum. He submitted to the Prophet that he was a blind man and lived at some distance from the mosque, moreover wild beasts and stray animals moved about in the streets. Could it be possible, in these circumstances, that he may be excused from attending the mosque and could he say Salat individually at home. The Prophet asked him, "Do you hear the call for prayer ?" The reply being in the affirmative the Prophet said "How can you get an exemption ? You must come to the mosque for the congregation."

It is worth noting that these obstacles were prima facie justification enough for absenting from the congregation, but the companions did not treat them as an excuse, they did not act on their own. They asked the Prophet for his permission and the reply given by the Prophet, inspite of all these obstacles, is indicative enough of the great importance attached to the congregational prayers in the mosque. Of course there is one instance of Athan bin Malik mentioned in Traditions where the Prophet had given an exemption from attending the congregation in view of similar obstacles. Some scholars do favour an exemption in these circumstances. As regards the instances quoted herebefore, where the Prophet had not given exemption, they argue that the purpose of the Prophet was to impress that endeavour even at the cost of some inconvenience was better than exemption and moreover the rewards promised for a congregational prayer are connected with attending the mosque. Only he will earn these rewards and blessings of God who endeavours to attend the mosque.

The author of *Al Tahrir-al-Mukhtar* has related this episode slightly different. It reconciles the conflicting directions given by the holy Prophet, permission in one case and refusal to give permission in the other. He says, Atban bin Malik had requested the Prophet for permission to perform prayer at a particular place in his house which he had turned into a mosque. It may be that after turning that place into a mosque he was leading the congregation of his tribe. Thus he cannot be said to be missing the congregation nor that he was absenting from the mosque. As a matter of fact he gave up attending a mosque which was at some distance from his house in view of his disability and choose a nearby mosque. There is no harm in it. It is like some people building a mosque in their locality and giving up attending the Jama Masjid. It is well known that there were mosques for each tribe of the Ansars (in their respective localities). Those who could not attend the congregation with the Prophet (at the Prophet's mosque) for some reason performed their prayers (with the congregation) in these local mosques.

The episode of the Prophet's attempts to attend the congregation during his last illness has a moral lesson for us. He had grown extremely weak with illness and became unconscious but as soon as he recovered he asked, "Is the congregation over?" Getting a reply in the negative, he tried to get up for the congregational prayer but collapsed. This happened four times and each time he collapsed. Then ultimately he sent word to Abu Bakr that he may lead the congregation.

It also happened one day during the last illness that Abu Bakr was leading the congregation when the holy Prophet feeling somewhat better came to the mosque leaning on the shoulders of two persons. He was almost dragging himself due to extreme weakness. Thus the Prophet (peace be on him) taught not only by words but by precept how important and necessary it was to assemble together in one place and perform the prayer with the congregation.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONGREGATION DURING THE DAYS OF THE COMPANIONS

The companions followed the teachings of the Prophet in letter and spirit in this matter as in all other matters. Some instances are narrated here to show how the companions devoted themselves, heart and soul, to following the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Umm-e-Darda says that Abu Darda was quite agitated when he once came home. I asked him what was the matter. He said "By God, I do not find anything left in the Muslim Ummah except their congregational prayers, and now I find that they are set on giving up even these."

Omar the Great was extremely enthusiastic about congregational prayers. So much so that he met his death while he was in pursuit of congregational prayers. He was so particular about congregational prayers that if he found any one missing from the congregation in the mosque he used to visit his house and enquire about the reason of his absence. If the reason was not satisfactory he expressed his displeasure. One day he found some persons missing. He said, "How is it that these people are not coming to the mosque ? Others may also follow them and drop out. They ought to know that they have to come to the mosque regularly or else I will send men after them who will kill them. Then he said (to those present), "You must come to the mosque for congregational prayer." He repeated it three times.

One day he found Sulaiman Bin Abi Hatma missing at the morning prayer. Then in the day Omar was passing by the houses of Sulaiman. He stopped and asked his mother Shafa why Sulaiman had not come to the mosque for morning prayer. She told him that Sulaiman had been praying till late at night. In the early hours of the morning sleep overtook him and unintentionally he kept sleeping. Omar said, "Performance of morning

prayer with the congregation in the mosque is better than such a prayer at night which causes one to miss the morning congregation."

Abdullah Bin Masud relates that he saw some shop keepers who left every thing as it was and proceeded to the mosque as soon as they heard the call for prayer. At this sight, says Abdullah Bin Masud, he recalled that it is such people about whom Qur'an says :—

"By men whom neither Traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of God." (Al-Qur'an XXIV-38)

There is another story related about Omar Bin-al-Khattab : He found some one missing in the congregation. He went to his house, called him out and asked him why he did not attend the congregation. He replied, O' Caliph of the faithfuls ! I am not well and (perhaps he added) I do not have the strength for walking upto the mosque. I would not have come out if I had not heard your call." Omar said, "O man, you did not respond to the call of prayer which was necessary and you come out on my call ! O' bondman of God, it is not so important to respond to my call as it is to respond to the call towards God."

Omar is quoted as saying "Look for your brethren in the congregation. If you do not find some of them, find out if they are absent due to illness. If they have absented inspite of good health than penalise them."

In the context of this quotation Imam Ghazali says, laxity is not proper in the matter of congregational prayers. The people in the good old days paid great attention to it.

"People took out funeral processions of those who did not attend congregational prayers; it implied that they were spiritually dead."

Saud bin-al-Musaib says that for ten years there had not been any occasion that he was not present in the mosque when the *Muazzin* called for prayers. He had not missed any congregational prayer for ten years.

Matar Al-Rawaq says that the companions were so much devoted and enthusiastic about congregational prayers that as soon as they heard the call for prayer they left every thing as it was even if they had weighing scales in hand for weighing some thing for sale.

Amar bin Dinar-al-Ahwar says that one day he was going to the mosque with Salim bin Abdullah, passing through the bazar of Madinah he saw that every one had gone to the mosque. Their merchandise was covered with cloth and there was no one even to keep watch over it. At that sight Salim recalled to mind the Qur'anic verse :—

"By men whom neither Traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of God." (24:38)

And said these are the people to whom this verse refers.

SOME EPISODES FROM THE PIOUS MEN OF YORE

Once Maimoon Bin Mehran on reaching the mosque found that the congregational prayer was over. He recited "*Inna Lillah-i-wa-Inna Ilaihi-Rajion.*" (A phrase uttered on the occasion of some one's death or some great loss). Then he said I value the congregational prayer more than the governorship of Iraq.

The pious men of the past were very much devoted to and enthusiastic about congregational prayer. It is difficult to find a parallels (example of theirs) in the present times. The mourned the loss for three days even if they missed the first *Takbir* in a congregational prayer, and they remained grief-stricken for seven days if they missed the congregational prayer entirely.

From the foregoing examples of the pious men of good old days one can very well understand the importance of congregational prayers. Since citing examples from each generation over the last fourteen centuries would make this book unwieldy I would content myself with some examples and episodes from contemporary pious men to serve for light and guidance.

Shaikhul Hind Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan (God bless him) went to Makkah and from there to Taif during the period of the first world war. Life was quite disturbed. Indiscriminate fighting/firing was going on in the streets and the way to the mosque was hazardous. Even so the Maulana attended the mosque for prayers all the five times every day. Then he was arrested by the governor of Makkah at the instance of the British Government and was taken to Malta under the British military escort. He continued to offer prayers with the congregation throughout the journey even under the shadow of bayonets. The British soldiers kept him surrounded on all sides and the Maulana with his devoted followers performed congregational prayers. On reaching Malta they found the weather extremely cold. It was difficult to come out of the tent in the open air. Yet the Maulana and his followers did come out of their tents and assembled in another tent to perform congregational prayers.

Maulana Ilyas (God may bless him) who died recently, was devoted to congregational prayers. Some idea may be had from the following

extracts from Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi's Book — *Maulana Ilyas aur Unki Dini Tahrik*.

"In March 1944 he had grown very weak and was not able to lead the congregational prayers yet he came leaning on two persons to join the congregation and performed the prayers duly standing. Even in his last days he did not miss the congregational prayers — his cot was placed at the end of a row in the congregation and he performed the prayers with the congregation.

Maulana Basharat Karim (God may bless him) of Gurhola in district Muzaffarpur (Bihar) was a God fearing pious old man. He was not able to walk due to some ailment in his foot. But he was so much devoted to congregational prayers that he got a special wheel chair just for attending the mosque for congregational prayers five times every day.

Maulana Manzoor Nomani writes about his father, "My father was so very particular about congregational prayers as very few men are. Not only was he particular about himself attending the congregational prayers but he tried that every one of the household including children of due age should reach the mosque in time for congregational prayers. He used to call out every body as soon as the prayer time started and then, while on his way to the mosque, he kept reminding people (to come to the mosque). Lately he had developed cataract and had lost his eyesight. He could not see for himself the time of the day, so he keep asking much before due time as to how much had the shadow of the sun lengthened in front of the gate of his house to know the time for *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers (the time for these prayers is determined with reference to the lengthening shadow of the declining sun, and time for *Fajr* and *Maghrib* prayers is determined with reference to sun rise and sun set respectively).

When this author (Maulana Zafeeruddin Sahib) was a student of Miftahul-Ulum, he saw his teacher, Maulana Habibul Rahman Azami's father attending congregational prayers at the mosque of the mohalla inspite of his old age, weakness and pre-occupation with other works. Maulana Habibul Rahman was some times engrossed in his studies. But his father used to send one to call him and took with him his grand-children also.

Maulana Zafar Sahib of district Purnea (Bihar) was so enthusiastic about congregational prayers that he told people that individually performed prayer was not prayer at all. He expressed his displeasure to those who absented from the mosque without valid reason. He used to get a written undertaking from those who came to him for amulates that they would perform prayers with the congregation.

THE WISDOM AND THE REWARDS

Some Traditions and sayings of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) are cited below to impress upon the readers the wisdom and rewards of congregational prayers :

"The rewards of a congregational prayer are twenty five times that of the prayer performed individually at home or in the bazar. But this will be only when one performs ablution with a sense of dedication and then proceeds to the mosque in all sincerity. His status will be raised one degree for each step that he takes towards the mosque and likewise one sin will be forgiven for each step so taken."

"All the time that he remains on the musalla (prayer carpet) angels keep praying for the forgiveness of his sins and for God's mercy and blessings on him and when one is waiting in the mosque for the next prayer he gets the benefit of rewards as if he were busy in prayer."

In another Tradition it is mentioned that the congregational prayer is twenty seven times better than the prayer individually performed. These Traditions make it clear that congregational prayer has preference over individual prayer and earns higher rewards and that every step of a man going to perform the congregational prayer washes off one sin from his records and raises his position high, a step for a step, and angels keep praying for him so long as he remains in the mosque.

The obligation of performing the *Fardh* (compulsory prayer) is duly met by performing the prayers individually. Yet there is a qualitative difference between individual prayer and congregational prayer. The great impact which the congregational prayer makes on the mind and soul of a man is wanting in individual prayer. And the greater the congregation the greater is the impact and also its rewards.

A Tradition narrated in Abu Daud says, "A man's prayer jointly with another man is better than his individual prayer, while that with two others is better than with one man and the larger the number in the congregation the more approved and rewarded it is by God."

There is a mention of higher rewards for congregational prayer in the Traditions quoted in the previous pages, twenty-five times higher rewards mentioned in one Tradition and twenty-seven times in another. The difference may be based on various factors like the intensity of feeling, degree

of sincerity, measure of distance between the house and the mosque etc. The number twenty-five and twenty-seven both may have been used for signifying the higher rewards for congregational prayers and not for specifying the quantum of reward as an arithmetical unit obtained by an exercise of multiplying the single unit by twenty-five or twenty-seven. There may be some other explanation too. Hafiz Ibn Hajar has offered many explanation reconciling this difference but the most appealing he finds is that the difference is based on the fact that the one applies to the prayers in which the Qur'an is recited loudly whereas the other applies to those prayers in which the Qur'an is recited inaudibly. Our imagination need not be exercised in reconciling the difference of twenty-five times and twenty-seven times and finding far-fetched explanations.

The trend of the Prophets' sayings and their wordings indicate that there is something more than the specifically mentioned high rewards although we may not be able to grasp what that something is. Limitations of human intellect are too well known. The holy Prophet says, "You do not know anything about it."

Winning the Hearts

Islam has always aimed at winning the hearts rather than applying force and pressure particularly for worship. It has aimed at motivating people, invoking a man's interest in prayer and not making it burdensome. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) once said, "One who covers longer distance in coming to the mosque gets greater rewards than the other man coming from nearby, and the man who keeps waiting (in the mosque) for the next congregational prayer with the Imam gets greater reward than the man who does not wait (for the next congregational prayer) and goes to sleep after quickly performing the prayer."

"Bukhari Chapter on morning prayer with the congregation."

Notice the trend of the Prophet's saying. How sweet and impressive! It is persuasive. There is incentive but no trace of coercion. There were occasions, however, when force had to be applied for ensuring compliance to rules. A group of hypocrites had grown up which spread mischief and lethargy among the faithful and sowed the seeds of dissention. It was necessary therefore sometimes to shake up the faithful out of lethargy with warnings like the one reported in a Tradition.

The Apostle of God said, "The early morning and late night prayers are very hard on the hypocrites, but if they knew the rewards and importance of these prayers, they would come running at all cost. I feel like asking

the *Muazzin* to call for prayer and depute some one to lead the congregation; myself, I may go out with burning fire in my hands to burn down those who did not move out for congregational prayer."

Hafiz Ibn Hajar comments that the idea behind this Tradition is that people should come to the place where congregational prayers for these two times (early morning and late night) are performed and such a place is the mosque.

For the sake of inculcating unity, discipline and mutual cooperation it is necessary that the venue of the congregation should be such as may be accessible to one and all without let or hindrance. The mosque is such a place. It is God's property and open to all, not anybody's personal property.

VIRTUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAYER

It is harder to perform prayers in the early morning, late night and at mid-day than at the time of *Asr* and *Maghrib*. Those who have attended the mosque for early morning and late night prayers during winter season know how trying it is to leave the cosy corners of one's house and tread the dark lanes to the mosque (in old towns and villages) in biting cold and take ablution (*Wadhu*) with cold water. Even during summers, when the *Muazzin* calls for morning prayer one has to make a supreme effort to shake off sleep induced by morning breeze and to go to the mosque for prayer. When the sky is overcast with clouds and nights are dark during the rainy season, or when it is actually raining, it is a hard task to attend the mosque for *Isha* prayer. Similarly the scorching sun at mid-day makes it a very difficult task in summer to go to the mosque for *Zuhr* prayer. Human nature being what it is, one is tempted to miss the congregational prayer. That is why the holy Prophet (peace be on him) has laid great emphasis on these three prayers and has very beautifully impressed on the faithful that these prayers may be hard on the hypocrites, who are not blessed with the light of faith but not for those who are firm in their faith. Says the Tradition, "If these people knew the high privileges and rewards and believed it as true then they would not have stayed back at home under any circumstances and would have reached the mosque braving all hardship." Because the attendance at the congregational prayers in the mosque at these three times, *Fajr*, *Isha* and *Zuhr* is hard on men the *Shariah* makes a special mention of these for higher rewards matching the hardship. On one occasion the holy Prophet (peace be on him) mentioned these three prayers and said: "If people knew the privileges enjoyed by the man who calls for prayer

(the Muazzin) and of finding a place in the first row of the congregation, they would compete with one another and draw lots for the privilege."

It is related by Uthman bin Affan that the Apostle of God (peace be on him) said, "If one performs the Isha prayer with the congregation it is as if he was standing in prayer for half the night and when one performs the morning prayer (also) with the congregation it is as if he spent the whole night in prayer."

Saying that the reward for congregational prayer for these times is equal to the prayer offered through half the night or throughout the whole night, this Tradition is an attractive invitation to the faithful to bear all difficulties and attend the congregation. It also clarifies that the reward for congregational prayer is not just twenty-seven times of the individually performed prayer but much more.

Abu Hurairah once saw a person leaving the mosque after the Azan had been called. He sternly said, "The man has indeed disobeyed the holy Prophet (peace be on him)."

A man who leaves his house for attending the congregation but misses the congregation is not deprived of the rewards for his labour. The Prophet (peace be on him) has clarified that a man who came to the mosque after performing ablution but misses the congregation would get full rewards for congregational prayers. However, exemptions are granted to those who are unable to attend the mosque for valid reasons. But it is desirable that they strive for joining the congregation and take it as incumbent upon themselves.

There is wisdom and rationale in every thing that has been ordained by *Shariah* even though a human intelligence may not readily perceive it. However, there are some learned men of distinction who do perceive the wisdom and rationale of various practices prescribed by *Shariah*. In the congregational prayer too there are many benefits flowing from it and advantages accruing to the congregation. Some of these are described below.

The faithful assemble for congregational prayers at the mosque where every Muslim has an equal right to enter. Every one is entitled, as a matter of right, to join the congregation and every one, old and young, urbane and rustic, the learned and the illiterate, has equal status. To be part of the congregation is a privilege in itself. The congregation is so frequently held (five times a day), that it becomes a routine. It becomes difficult for any one to miss the congregation even if laziness or disinterestedness prompted

him to do so; for his neighbour would look for him and enquire the reason for his absence if he is not there. If one could not give any valid excuse, he would lose his image in society.

Thus regular attendance at the congregational prayers would shake off laziness and make people alert. One would be compelled under social pressure to attend the mosque for congregational prayers. This is the test which would segregate and distinguish those who are sincere and earnest about their faith and those whose profession of faith is just hypocritical.

It is also a test for those who are educated and learned in the principles of faith, the Ulama, whether they discharge their duty of informing the people of the Do's and Dont's ordained by *Shariah* and of educating them.

At these congregations it is not one man or two persons but a large number of Muslims of the locality praying together for God's mercy and blessings, it is therefore most likely that God will grant the prayers of the congregation and bless their collective efforts with success. The purpose of the Ummah that God's praises be sung and His name resound the atmosphere and the tenets of faith universally prevail is best served by the congregational prayers.

Satan, the devil is a declared enemy of man and is all the time busy creating discord and dissensions among men, dividing them into small groups and rule over them. The congregational prayers defeat his purpose. The Prophet (peace be on him) refers to this aspect in a Tradition. "At any place, whether populated or barren, where there live three persons and they do not perform the congregational prayers, the Satan gets hold over them."

The idea is that wherever it is possible to perform congregational prayer it must be performed or else laziness will creep in among the faithful. When congregations are held with enthusiasm and devotion Satan is doomed. Commenting on the Qur'anic *Ayah* relating to Masjid-e-Dharar, Ibn-al-Arabi has dealt with this aspect of purification of heart and elevation of mind through congregational prayers. He says: "All the Muslims were one body and performed prayers in one mosque. The hypocrites wanted that this unity in prayer may be disrupted and they (the hypocrites) may separate themselves from the main body and work for the advancement of irreligion and sin. This incident of (Masjid-e-Dharar) demonstrated that the purpose of God's order for congregation is that the hearts of Muslims be united, they may become one in submission to God and they may be well organised so that they may love each other, be free from ill will and enmity."

Imam Malik grasped this significance (of congregational prayers) very well, so much so that he asserted that there cannot be two congregational

prayers in a mosque for the same time, neither with two separate leaders nor even under the same leader, lest it defeat the very purpose of the congregation, and lest it provide an opportunity for splitting the congregation and putting up another leader and thus open the flood-gates of disruption and destroy the solidarity and unity of Muslims.

Indeed the fundamental purpose of congregation prayers is what has been stated above. That is why some leading theologians have strongly held that a mosque where Azan is called and congregational prayers are held, a second congregation is not desirable. The high rewards and primacy of position attaches only to the first congregation. The importance of congregational prayers becomes all the more clear when we consider the question of prayers under conditions of fright. Two congregations are not permissible even on the battle-field, during actual fighting; how can it be permitted in times of peace, at the mosque of the locality. It is a different matter when it concerns a wayside mosque, since it is not possible to have any regular congregation. Instances of second congregation wherever mentioned in the Traditions refer to the wayside mosques. The Traditions quoted in the foregoing pages clearly shows that in the life time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there used to be only one congregation in the mosque and that was the right thing to do under the rules.

Since the second congregation, if held at all, does not have the same privileges and rewards as the first congregation, every one would naturally strive for joining the first congregation and be on time for it. The tendency to laxity, on account of the possibility of catching the second congregation if the first one is missed, is curbed. The first congregation itself would be a big one. The heart of the faithful would be reflecting light from each one to the others and those souls in the congregation would be like so many mirrors kept in just a position, the rays of light falling on these and each one reflecting these rays to the others.

This state of mind and soul would be at its highest point in the morning prayers (*Fajr*) for the men would be refreshed after a night's rest and would be free from the worries which fill up the mind during the day. Hence it is that the reward for the morning prayer performed with the congregation is equal to the prayers of a whole night.

The unity of thought, of mind and spirit, in submission to the Almighty God would lead to the prosperity and progress both in the material as well as spiritual life. It would strike the mind of those assembled for prayer that just as they unite and fall in line under the discipline of the congregational prayers for the pleasure of the Almighty they should unite

on matters of every day life, in the social, economic, political and other fields. Just as unity at the spiritual level leads them to defeat the devil's designs so also they can conquer their enemies in life through unity among themselves in worldly matters.

The leadership of one Imam of the congregation in prayers would certainly prove the idea that in worldly matters too there should be one leader of the Ummah and that this would invoke God's blessings for success in worldly matters just like the rewards for congregational prayers under the leadership of one Imam.

The participation in the congregation under one roof and falling in line for the prayers would install such a spirit of fraternity among the participants as can not be infused by any number of lectures and conferences.

Here there is no distinction of king or slave, rich or poor, sophisticated or rustic, bourgeoisie or proletariat, of caste or colour, race or tribe. There is no reserved place for any one. If at all there is a precedence for any one it is on the basis of one's piety and awe of God and scholarship, and on the degree of his being God-fearing. In fact even these things do not fetch a man any reserved place in the congregation. Learning is held in high esteem and carries weight, but not a reserved place in the congregation. The greatest scholar will take his place wherever available on his arrival. These congregational prayers inculcate among the members a sense of fraternity and integration and dispel all feelings of jealousy and enmity. The Qur'an also refers to this quality and the impact of the congregations :—

“Establish regular prayers, and be not ye among those who join gods with God, those who split up their religion, and become (mere) sects.”
(Al-Qur'an XXX-32.)

FRATERNITY, MUTUAL LOVE AND AFFECTION

Daily meeting under a special devotional state of mind is conducive to a feeling of equality among all members of the congregation and, at the same time of feelings of love and affection, sympathy and fraternity. If one is in a shattered condition and tattered clothes the others would be naturally prompted to do him a good turn, to help him out of his difficulty. This will set a chain of action and reaction towards developing a healthy society. The advantages flowing from the congregation prayers are many and recounting them all would run into a big volume.

We have recounted only some of the benefits to the *Ummah*. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) held this system of congregational prayers dear to his heart till his last breath.

Anas says that during the last illness of the Prophet (peace be on him) it happened that one Monday while the Prophet was confined to bed Abu Bakr led the prayers and the congregation was standing in rows behind him. The holy Prophet got up from his bed, came to the door and lifted the curtain to look at the congregation which was busy in prayers. It was a heartening sight indeed. The holy Prophet was happy when he saw the companions performing the congregational prayers carefully following the leader in every move. They were united at heart just as they were united in the rows of the congregation. He smiled.

FRIDAY CONGREGATION AT JAMA MASJID

The mosques in every locality serve as centres for the people of that locality to assemble five times a day. They assemble once in a week for Juma prayers at the Jama Masjid. It is difficult to collect all the people of a big town every day, hence this weekly gathering.

Many benefits flow from the weekly congregation at Jama Masjid. The *Shariah* has therefore made it clear that Juma prayers should be performed only in one mosque in a town. This was the practice in the days of the holy Prophet and the first four Caliphs. Juma prayers were not performed at several mosque in a town. The author of *The Mabsut* (who is himself against performance of Juma prayers at several places in a town) writes :—

“Indeed many cities were conquered in the days of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and the first four Caliphs. But they never built more than one Jama Masjid in a town. If performance of Juma prayers is allowed in two mosques then it will have to be allowed in more than two mosques until at last people will perform Juma prayers in their own mosques (of the locality). No one (among the theologians) is in favour of such multiple congregation for Juma prayers.”

Juma prayers at two mosques would lead to reduce the strength at each congregation. Show of strength of the faithful on this occasion is an important symbol of the faith. To approve of a proposal which (leads to multiple congregation and) reduces the strength of the congregation at each mosque would not be proper.

Sarakhashi has stated that multiplicity of Juma congregation would in fact defeat the purpose of Juma congregation because it will cause disruption, and reduce the strength of the congregation. Shariah prescribed this day for weekly congregation so that the faithful may demonstrate the strength and dignity of the faith through the weekly gatherings and reap the benefits in life here and hereafter.

We do not find any instance of more than one congregation in a city for the Juma prayers during the period of four Caliphs and even upto the third century of the Hijra era. Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal who belonged to the third century of Hijra has denied the prevalence of more than one congregation in his days. Hafiz bin-Hajar Asqalani (God bless him) in his pamphlet entitled 'Multiple Juma congregation' writes :—

Athram relates from Imam Ahmad as saying "I am not aware of any Muslim city where two congregations were held for Juma prayers." Imam Ahmad belonged to the third century (of Hijra) thus it is clear that in the first three centuries of Hijra congregation of Juma prayers were not held in more than one place.

Most of the scholars of the Hanafi school, and other Imams too, support the view that there should not be multiplicity of Juma congregations in any town. Some treat it as totally (unpermitted) and some treat it as against propriety. The great Imam Abu Hanifa (God bless him) considered the multiplication of Juma prayers as not permissible but in another reference he has considered it as permissible. Imam Tahavi, *Tamariushi* and the author of the *Durr-e-Mukhtar* have relied on the opinion which is against multiple Juma congregations. Imam Shafai is against multiplicity and so is Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. Subki Shafai has asserted that multiplicity of Juma congregation is not proved by the reports handed down by any companion (of the Prophet) and their immediate followers.

After a careful consideration of all these opinions and writings we have to conclude that unless there is a river or a canal dividing a city it is necessary to have only one Juma congregation in a city. If there is a river dividing the town which prevents people's movement from one side of it to the other or where the population and the size of the town is so big that the whole congregation cannot be contained in a mosque and people cannot

* Khatib, in the History of Baghdad, writes that the pioneer of the evil of multiple congregations for Juma prayers was Mutadhid. It was in his times that another congregation besides the one at the Juma Masjid was held for Juma prayers in the capital for the first time in 280 A.H. But this congregation was held not in a mosque. A mosque (in addition to the already existing Juma Masjid) was built in the days of Caliph Muktafi (Islahu-Masajid P. 58).

reach it conveniently, then Juma congregation may be held at two places. But the multiple congregations for Juma prayers as are held these days are not in any way permissible under rules of Shariah. It may, however, not be appropriate to raise a dispute on the present practice of multiple congregation, but it must be said that it is against the very purpose and the spirit of Juma congregations. Performance of congregational prayers for *Zuhr* instead of Juma by those who cannot attend the Juma prayers at the Juma Masjid is considered objectionable (i.e. persons who cannot attend the regular Juma prayers, e.g. the sick and the travellers who are on their way far away from Juma Masjid, should perform the *Zuhr* prayer individually and not with a congregation.

Maulana Bahrul-Ulum who approves of multiple Juma congregations, considers the performance of *Zuhr* prayers with congregation instead of Juma prayers as objectionable. The reason given by him is that the Juma prayers bring together the various groups of the city. If the disabled hold a separate congregation (in their neighbouring according to their convenience) it is possible that those not disabled may also join these congregations and thus it will cause disruption in the main congregation. In view of such great importance attached to Juma congregation how can splitting into separate congregations in several mosques be justified.

It must also have been clear to the reader that on account of the great significance and importance of the Juma congregation the place of Jama Masjid in the chain of mosques is very important. Here it is that the Muslims from all over the city collect once in a week and perform the prayers with great dignity and decorum.

Allama Ibn Qayyim writes :—

Indeed Friday is the day for men (of faith) to assemble together and ponder over the beginning and the end (of life). God made one day in a week for every Ummah (community) which they reserve for prayer. On this day they keep away from work and business and contemplate upon the beginning and the end of life and think of the rewards for good deeds and punishment for their sins. At these gatherings their thoughts go out to the vast multitudes that will be assembled on the Day of Judgment. The most appropriate day (for the Muslims) was naturally the one on which the big gathering will be held on the day of Judgment and that will be Friday. So God has ordained the weekly congregation on this day.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) sometimes recited the Surah Juma in the Friday prayers. The Surah lays emphasis on the Juma prayers and forbids all activities which may keep men away from the congregation of

Friday prayers. Great emphasis is laid on reciting God's Name and repeating it for innumerable times so that it serves for the purification of mind and leads them to success.

In the second *Rak'* the holy Prophet used to recite Surah *Munafiqun*. He meant perhaps to warn the Ummah against disruption which is the root cause of doom and destruction here and in the hereafter and he wanted to caution the Ummah that love of children or of wealth and worldly possessions should not make them forgetful of the Juma prayers and of remembrance of God and lastly to remind them of death and tell them that they must do here and now whatever they want to do in order to gain the pleasure of God and earn the fruits of piety for the life hereafter, for after death there will be no more any chance for these earnings. It will be time only for reaping whatever one has sown in the life here in the world; enjoying the rewards for good actions and suffering the punishment for the sins committed during one's life time. The Imams generally recite verses from Surah Juma and *Munafiqun* in the Juma prayers.

In this weekly congregation there are innumerable benefits : all the benefits recounted in the connection with the daily (five times) congregation, and many besides them as so many people of several congregations of the city coverage at one place and all of them stand behind one leader (Imam). This Imam is in a way, the leader of the whole city and people follow him in every movement in prayers. The Imam delivers an address on this day. He recites the praises of God and His Apostle and then reminds the audience of their duties and responsibilities in the light of teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet's Tradition. The Imam gives political and religious guidance to the people of the town and reviews the events of the week. He talks of the life and works of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and the first four Caliphs and of remembrance of the good times of the first century and exhorts them to review the life of those times.

That is why it has been made compulsory to listen to the Imam's address attentively. As soon as the Imam rises for the address every one is attentive. There is pin drop silence. Nobody speaks. All movement is stopped. Even saying the *Sunnah* and *Nafil* prayer is not allowed during the Imam's address. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If during the Imam's address you speak even so much as to tell your brother to keep quiet you have done a foolish thing." Thus no one except the Imam has a right to speak at all, not even for correcting some one to do the right thing. The Imam would naturally be the best man of the community. He would be overwhelmed with such devotional feeling that every word which he utters would move

hearts of the audience and stir their minds. Such used to be the address of the holy Apostle of God. Hazl. Jabir says :—

'When the Prophet (peace be on him) addressed the congregation his eyes (turned red) were inflamed, his voice loud and his tone was earnest. It appeared as if he was giving warning against an imminent invasion of an army. He used to say that the distance between the day of Judgment and me is just as much as between my middle finger and the index finger.'

On this day the personal appearance of the Imam should also be dignified and distinctive. Ibn Harith says :—

'On Friday the holy Prophet of God used to wear black turban from which two ends hung loose on his shoulders when he addressed the congregation.'

With the various things made ancilliary to the Juma congregational prayers the grandeur of the congregation becomes all the more impressive. Every one in the audience comes to the mosque in his best clothes donned after a bath, his teeth brushed and some people with a spray of fragrant attar. The instructions for the Imam are that he should deliver his address in such a way that the audience listen to him with devotion and are enthused and their spirit is elevated. The Apostle of God said, "Long prayer and short address of a faithful is the sign of his being a disciplined scholar. Make your prayers lengthy and your address short. Indeed some addresses work like a spell." Of course it does not mean that the Imam should always be brief even when circumstances require otherwise. He has the discretion to make his address lengthy enough to meet the demand of the hour and cover the current affairs. Such was the practice of the holy Prophet. Some times his address was long, some times short according to the need of the hour.

Allama Ibn-ul-Qayyim writes, 'The holy Prophet delivered the address as circumstances demanded, sometimes long, some times brief.'

The Imam should deliver the address standing and he should be facing the audience so that they are attentive towards him and listen to his address. Such was the practice of the holy Apostle of God.

The holy Apostle of God used to deliver the address standing, facing the audience and concentrated his attention on them. Facing the audience and paying attention to them not only in physical terms and but he should also focus the rays of his spiritual light on them.

On Friday there comes an efficacious moment when God specially grants men's prayers. A Tradition of the holy Prophet says that the

supplication of the faithful is granted with certainty at that moment on Friday. The supplication of the faithful made at that moment is never rejected. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) once said "On Fridays there comes a moment when a supplication of the faithful made after offering prayers is granted by God, whatever one may ask for. But that moment is brief."

Does that brief moment occur even now or it has ceased to occur. Does it occur on every Friday or on some special Friday ? There are different views about it. The correct view is that this moment of acceptance of supplications occurs even now and it occurs on every Friday. But it is a debatable point as to when that moment occurs. Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajar Asqalani has quoted forty two statements and has traced the source of each statement and stated the reasons in support of each view. But the more prevailing view is that this moment is a secret of God. There is no fixed time for it. The idea is that man will busy himself in praying throughout the day in search of that moment.

It is for these reasons that great emphasis is laid on the Juma prayers. The Juma prayers is to be performed with the congregation. It is not permitted to perform it individually. Those who are handicapped and disabled may perform *Zuhr* prayer individually instead of Juma prayers. A whole *Surah* has been revealed with the title (Juma) in the Qur'an. The following *Ayah* is part of the *Surah* :-

"O ye who believe when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (The Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic) this is best for you if ye but know."
(Al-Qur'an LXII-9.)

The importance of Juma prayers has been impressed in many ways in several Traditions. Some of these Traditions are cited here : "Congregational prayer of Juma is a bounden duty on every Muslim, except four categories, i.e. a slave, a woman, a child and a sick man."

A warning is sounded for those who miss the Juma prayers. Abu-Hurairah and Abdullah bin Umar says :—

"We have heard the holy Apostle of God saying that either people will stop absenting from the Juma prayers or God will put a seal on their hearts; then, of course, they will be among the ignorant and the headless.

In another Tradition related in Abu-Daud's compilation narrates : "Whoever misses the prayer on three Fridays due to lethargy, God puts a seal on his heart." In a Tradition related in *Muslim* the Prophet is reported

to have said, "I feel like burning those who do not attend the Juma prayers." Allama Ibn-el-Qayyim has, in the light of these Traditions, said that the Juma prayers are the most emphasised among the many duties ordained on Muslims.

The gathering on Fridays are grand and important, so much so that it is the only congregation which is compulsory besides the gathering at the Pilgrimage at Arafat. Whoever misses this gathering only due to his lethargy God will put a seal of darkness on his heart. The rewards for Juma supplications are high; on the day of Judgment God will grant audience first to those who were near the Imam in Friday prayers and reached the Juma Masjid early.

All this emphasis is for keeping the order and system of Jama Masjid effective on solid grounds so that the faithful may reap the worldly and spiritual benefits fully and lethargy, indifference or negligence may not affect them.

In this weekly gathering there are men from all walks of life. Leading men in different fields, the scholars, the pious men, the trademen, the rich and the poor, all. They would have their own views of their surroundings and their own ideas about the things that they could do or that are needed for the welfare and development of society. Some would think of educating the people about their spiritual and material welfare. These efforts are likely to stir the people to work unitedly for the betterment of their community.

TWO SPECIAL GATHERINGS IN A YEAR

Besides these weekly gatherings of the whole city or town there are two special gatherings in the year, one is called Id-ul-Fitr and the other Id-ul-Azha. These are performed in Idgah. Idgah is closely connected with the order (system) of mosques and it cannot be separated from the chain of mosques. Many rules applicable to the mosques apply to Idgah also. Some times the congregational prayers of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha are also held in mosques. But these prayers are not included in and do not correspond to any of the five daily prayers as the Juma prayer corresponds to and is in lieu of the Zuhr prayer. These prayers are additional to the five prayers a day. These two prayer are *Wajib* (and not *Fardh*) and that is why a call for prayer (Azan) and a second call for prayer (Takbir) is not made. The Imam's sermon is delivered after the prayer unlike the Juma prayer, when the Imam's sermon is delivered before prayers. Other rules of procedure are almost the same as for Juma prayers.

This gathering is even more impressive and grand than the Juma (Friday) gathering. People make special preparations for it and generally it is held outside the city in an open ground.

On one of these occasion (Id-ul-Fitr) there are orders for giving special alms (*Sadaqa-e-Fitr*) and on the other occasion orders are for offering sacrifice of goat or another animals. These alms and sacrifices help the poor and enables these to share the mood and join the festivities.

When we consider the matter in the light of several Traditions on the subject it transpires that besides other advantages and significance of these two occasions it is also the purpose of these gatherings to make an impressive demonstration of the glory and strength of the Muslims. That is why orders are that one should go to the Idgah by one route and return by another route. On the occasion of Id-ul-Adha orders are to recite Takbir loudly on the way to the Idgah.

It is narrated in some Traditions that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) ordered that woman should also assemble on the occasion of 'Id'; even those women who for some reason or the other, cannot perform prayer on that day (e.g. impurity during menstrual period) should attend Idgah. Some scholars hold the view that in the early days of Islam the purpose of these gatherings was to demonstrate the strength and glory of the Muslims and hence this order to maximise attendance at Idgah. Now that Islam is established and it is no more necessary to demonstrate the numerical strength and glory as was needed in the early stages, the gathering of woman is not favoured. Some scholar favour the gathering of women on these occasion even in present times.

These gatherings on the occasion of the two Ids have served great purpose in the early days of Islam, i.e., in the days of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) and the first four Caliphs. These occasions can be utilized for serving a special purpose even now. We have to thank ourselves if we are ignorant of the wisdom of the practices of religion and do not avail these opportunities. These gatherings can be utilized to serve the purpose of a big conferences and for imparting education in the matters of faith to those who are ignorant of them as was the practice of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). These occasions came handy for preaching, for spreading the message of Islam. He organised Jihad on these occasions. Hazrat Abu Saeed Khudri says :—

“The holy Prophet (peace be on him) used to come to Idgah on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha. First of all he performed the prayer and after that he addressed the people. People remained sitting at their place

and the Prophet (peace be on him) delivered a sermon to them and gave orders as necessary. If the army had to be sent on an expedition (Jihad) he despatched them or, as demanded by the circumstances, issued orders on other matters, and thereafter he returned home."

This Tradition is very clear. It depicts the great importance and dignity of the congregation of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha. The work of sending the army on expedition is not a simple and easy task. The Prophet (peace be on him) utilized this occasion for such an important business. We should also learn a lesson from it and take advantage of the occasion for attending to important matters of faith and of the community that may demand attention at the time; for it is not easy to collect people in such large numbers separately. Imam's address on the occasion on the two Ids is after prayers unlike the address of Juma prayers which it is before the prayers. Perhaps the reason is that the occasion of 'Id' may be utilized for conducting important business of the hour. There are prescribed extra Rak'ats of prayer after the compulsory prayers of Juma while there are no extra prayer after 'Id'.

It is related by Abdullah Ibn Umar that the holy Apostle of God and Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar performed 'Id' prayers before the sermon. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to address women also on these occasions and remind them of their duties.

It is related in a Tradition that after addressing the men folk he (the Prophet) came to the assembly of women and preached sermon to them and exhorted them to give alms (*Sadaqa*). The narrator says that he saw that the women taking off ornaments from their ears and necks and giving them away to Bilal. Then the Prophet went home with Bilal.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ASSEMBLY AT MASJID-AL-HARAM

On the occasion of Id-ul-Adha an unique assembly of men from all over the world is held at Makkah, which is the birth place of the holy Prophet. It is the centre of attraction for every one since the days of Adam; it is the centre of God's grace and a shadow of His blessings: it is called the centre of the earth. This is the organisation of the Muslim world which binds all the believers in Islam together with each other from whatever land they may come and whatever race or family they may belong to. The assembly is held every year at the Masjid-al-Haram which is the first mosque in the world. The Qur'an says about the mosque :—

THE WORLD MUSLIM CONFERENCE

The Masjid-al-Haram is the privileged place visited by the people since the beginning of the world. This has been the venue of world Islamic Conference every year since the spread of Islam. Here the representatives of Islam from North and South, from East and West meet every year on a fixed day and proclaim their faith in the unity of God and in Muhammad (peace be on him) being his Apostle. Mark a special feature of this gathering. The official language (the language in which they perform various religious rites and duties) is one, their appearance is also uniform and their call and utterances are also one — all singing praise of God and supplicating for the Prophet (peace be on him) and begging forgiveness for their sins. All distinctions of race or nationality and differences of country disappear and only one relationship, of belonging to Islam, pervades the minds of all and they all become members of a large family.

Such a big gathering can serve so many purposes. The holy Apostle of God utilized this gathering for many important tasks both during the early period at Makkah and also during the later period, after migration to

Madinah. It was on the occasion of this assembly at Masjid-al-Haram that message of Islam reached visitors from Madinah and they carried it home with them from where it spread all over the world. The companion of the holy Apostle of God utilized this gathering for political and religious purposes and in later times also the scholars, compilers and commentators of the holy Prophet's Traditions utilized this assembly for thrashing out many questions.

We can still make use of this gathering for worldly and spiritual gains. This provides a good opportunity for the propagation of faith because people gather there with a single minded devotion to religious pursuit, shaking off from their minds all other cares and worries. The Qur'an declares about this Masjid-al-Haram.

- (1) "Remember, we made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety."
(Al-Qur'an II-125.)**
- (2) "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journey through deep and distant mountain highways."
(Al-Qur'an XXII-27.)**

CHAPTER SIX

THE CALL FOR THE CONGREGATION (AZAN)

The Shariah has prescribed a very charming way for calling men to the congregation. It has its own importance and many are the benefits in this system.

The five times of prayers in a day are fixed. It was therefore necessary that there should be some means of informing every body that it is time for the congregation prayers and reminding them that they have to proceed to the mosque for the same.

In the early days of Islam the holy Prophet (peace be on him) held consultations with his companions. Different suggestions were made by several persons. Some one suggested the fire may be lighted to indicate that it is time for congregational prayers. Somebody suggested blowing of horn and another suggested sounding a bugle. The Prophet (peace be on him) did not accept any of these suggestions because each one amounted to following some sect or the other. The pagans lit fire, Jews blow horn and Christians sounded the bugle. No decision was arrived at in these consultations and people dispersed.

Abdullah bin Umar relates that the matter came under consideration after arrival in Madinah. People (companions) made some suggestions (as mentioned above). After hearing them Omar (Omar Ibn Khattab) said why not send some one to call men for prayer ? The Prophet (peace be on him) asked Bilal to go and give a call for prayer. During the same period Abdullah bin Zaid bin Abd-ul-Rabab had a dream in which he was taught the words of Azan and Iqamat. He mentioned this dream before the Prophet (peace be on him) who confirmed his dream. The gist of the dream is that some one is standing with a blowing coconut shell horn in his hand. He asked the apparition if he would sell it. The man with the horn asked the purpose

(for which he wanted to buy it). He said "I will call the faithful for prayer." The apparition said he could suggest a better form for this purpose. On his request the apparition told him the words of the Azan and Iqamat in the order in which they are used now. When he woke up from sleep he came to the holy Prophet and narrated the whole incident. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "This dream is true, by the grace of God. Go and tell Bilal, whose voice is louder than yours, to give the call for prayer in these words", and Bilal complied.

When Omar heard the call he came to the Prophet pulling up his chadar and said, "O Apostle of God ! by the Almighty, who has sent you to us with the truth. I have also seen the same thing (in dream) which these people saw." Hearing this the Prophet (peace be on him) thanked God. Referring to this incident Shah Wali-Ullah says this is an evidence of the fact that the rules of Shariah are based on wisdom and will of God.

"When ye proclaim, your call to prayer, they take it (but) as mockery and sport; this is because they are a people without understanding."
(Al-Qur'an V-61.)

The wisdom (of God) demanded that the Azan should be not only an intimation to Salat or an announcement but that it should be in itself a symbol of the faith. It is a call given to those who are careless or who live at some distance from the mosque. Those who accept and respond to this call are the true followers of the faith. That is why the words of Azan include praise of God, of the supremacy of God and apostleship of His Prophet as well as the words which are clearly an invitation to the prayer.

History of Azan : When was Azan introduced ? The scholars are of the view that it was introduced after migration to Madinah as narrated above. The Qur'anic verses mentioning Azan also pertain to the post migration period, or the period of Madinah.

"O ye who believe when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic); that is best for you if ye but knew."
(Al-Qur'an LXII-9)

The commentators have mentioned that the Christians and Jews used to mock at this call. There was a Christian who used to say, "May the liar be burnt", when he heard in the Azan the words I testify that Muhammad is the apostle of God. He and his whole family died in a fire, each one of them was burnt to death. Another verse in the Qur'an is also of the post-migration Madinian period.

However it requires further research whether the final decision about prescribing the words and form of Azan was taken only from the dream of Abdullah bin Zaid or there was some revelation to the Prophet (peace be on him) from God. The Author's (Maulana Zafeeruddin's) view is that there was a revelation from God also and it was prior to the dream of Abdullah bin Zaid.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AZAN

The most significant thing about Azan is that it is a prominent symbol of Islam. The question whether Azan is called in a country or not is a crucial test for determining whether a place is as a 'Land of Peace' or otherwise: a country where Azan is called is to be treated as a 'Land of Peace'. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) halted his march and did not launch an assault where he heard the Azan. Secondly, Azan combines a part of the prophetic mission — an invitation and a persuasion to perform prayer, an important item of faith. The proclamation of truth and praise of God carries divine pleasure as nothing else does, and Satan (the devil) stands condemned. The one Tradition of the Prophet says that when Azan is called the devil runs away fast from the place. The Azan has a very important role in collecting the people for the congregational prayers. That is why the holy Prophet (peace be on him) included it among the symbols of faith.

Hazl. Anas says : The Prophet (peace be on him) took us on expeditions but he did not conduct the raids until dawn. If he heard Azan from the target place, he stopped and if he did not hear Azan he pushed on with his raid.

Azan has such an effect on the devil that he runs away from the place where Azan is called. Hazl. Jabir says, "I have heard the Prophet (peace be on him) say that the devil runs away at the sound of Azan and goes on running until he reaches *Rooha*." The narrators has clarified in this Tradition that *Rooha* is a place 36 miles from Madinah.

In another Tradition it is narrated that the devil gets perplexed at the sound of Azan and runs away from the place very far so that he may not hear the Azan. After the Azan is over he returns but agains runs away when Takbir is called. He again returns after the Takbir is over and viliates men's minds. The mind runs riot, all sorts of memories distract attention so much so that men forget how many Rak'ats of prayer they have performed.

Sheikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi while quoting this Tradition has posed a question and has himself supplied the answer. The question is : How is it

that the devil runs away from Azan but does not run away from recitation of the Qur'an and from Salat itself, although these two things are higher than Azan in the matter of importance and rewards? The Sheikh's answer is that God has blessed Azan and its words with so much force that the devil is scared on hearing it. Moreover Azan is only a prelude to Salat and is something separate from Salat. But there is no vanity or ostentation about it. On the other hand, prayers (Salat) and recitation of the Qur'an earn high rewards. But the thought that one is doing something which would earn him high rewards is bound to make the man vain, ostentatious and hypocritical. This gives the devil an opening into the mind of the faithful and polluting it. In any case the Azan has the special effect of driving away the devil.

Ibn Hajar has answered the question in his own way. One of the explanations he has given is that the devil runs away from Azan lest he be called upon to testify in favour of the Muazzin on the day of Judgment, or anybody, human or Jinn, who hears the Azan will have to testify on the day of Judgment that he heard the call given by the Muazzin. Some have said that the devil runs away from Azan in repulsion.

This symbol of Islam is a *Sunnat-e-Muakkada*. It is necessary to keep it alive and its omission is not permissible at any time.

The Muazzin who calls the Azan has a high place and status amongst the men of faith. The place occupied by Bilal in the history of Islam is known to all. He was the Chief Muazzin of the Prophet's (peace be on him) mosque. His call had an electrifying effect on all those who heard it and they came running to the mosque. The companions held him in high esteem and his name stirs the minds of millions of Muslims even today. There are several Traditions narrating that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) spoke highly of the Muazzin's place in the eyes of God.

"On the day of Judgment the Muazzin will hold his head high." "Any one who hears the call of Azan, be he a man or a Jinn or some other creature, will have to testify for the Muazzin on the day of Judgment." "Each and all on land and sea as far as the sound of his call reaches, will testify for him; he will get the reward equal to the rewards of the many faithful who come to prayer in response to his call." The Muazzin proclaims the glory of God and His being one and only one without any one else to share — His power and glory. God will reward him likewise by giving him on the day of Judgment higher place than others, giving him a distinguished status, and making every one who had heard his Azan to testify in his favour.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If people knew the virtue of the first row in the congregation and of calling Azan, they would obtain the chance even if they have to draw lots for it." "If a Muazzin calls Azan continuously for some days purely for God's pleasure he will be spared the hell-fire." "One who calls Azan for seven years purely for the sake of God and His pleasure, he will be declared free from the fear of hell-fire."

It transpires from these Traditions that one should not charge any remuneration for Azan. It is specifically stated in a Tradition that such a man should be deputed as Muazzin who does not charge any remuneration. Let us see here the views and verdict of the scholars of theology (theologians) about the remuneration for Azan and also about the salary of the Imam.

We have just seen that Muazzin should be such a man who seeks his rewards from God and not from man, for him are the happy tidings of forgiveness and salvation.

The early theologians have not permitted any remuneration for functions performed as a part of prayers or connected with prayers. The later day theologians have however permitted remuneration in view of the prevailing circumstances. Of course, the verdict of the earlier theologian is in the light of the Prophet's Tradition and practice. Later on people's devotion to religion was diluted. The theologians noted that even the semblance of faith among the Muslims will disappear if remuneration is not allowed for the Muazzin and the Imam. They also felt that payment to the Muazzin and the Imam could be treated as permissible within the framework of the rules of Shariah in a special form. So they gave their verdict allowing such payment when necessary.

Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddis Dehlvi has written elaborately on this points. He says : "Scholars are divided in opinion about accepting remuneration for leading the prayer (Imamat), for giving a call for prayer (Azan) and the delivering the sermon (Khutba). One group says that all these functions form part of prayer and any remuneration for performing any of these functions deprives the performer of any rewards (from God). So remuneration is not permissible. The other group says that the remuneration is not for these functions of prayer as such but it is for performing these functions at a fixed place (the specified mosque) and on fixed time regularly as a duty. The performance of these functions is part of prayer, but it is not part of prayer that these functions be performed at a fixed place. The fixedness of the place and time is something extraneous

to the performance of prayer. The remuneration is for the time bound duty on attendance at the fixed place (and not for prayer itself). As such it is permissible.

In the early days of Islam the Imams, the Muazzins and the men who deliver sermons perform these duties and functions for the sake of God. The Qazi, the Muhtasib and Mufu performed these functions purely for the sake of God. The Caliphs and Kings noticed that a class of people had devoted themselves to these services for the sake of God so they granted them stipends from the public exchequer, just enough for their needs. This was by way of help to them and not by way of remuneration for their work. But gradually it turned into a sort of remuneration instead of a stipend or grant and the performance of these function became a source of earning a livelihood. That is why this source of livelihood is looked upon as a dubious source in these days. One must avoid it as much as possible. The gist of what Shah Sabih has said is that if the payment to these men of faith is made by way of help to them, not by way of remuneration for the functions performed, it is permissible. However, it is preferable to avoid it.

Allama Ibn-e-Abideen writes in the *Dur rul Mukhtar* : "If the Imam, Muazzin or some one like them is deprived of earning a livelihood because of his performing these functions then it is all right for him to accept some remuneration, just enough for a livelihood. But if the performance of these functions does not come in the way of his earning a living then he should not accept any payment for performing these functions."

It would be clear from the discussion that the Muazzin should avoid receiving payment for his calling the Azan. Unfortunately these days calling the Azan is considered as something below dignity of the elite, for, if this were not so, there would be no need to have a paid Muazzin. The well to do have given up religion and have absolved themselves (in their self-conceit) of all responsibilities in favour of the poor. The function of calling Azan and the man who calls the Azan have a high place among the faithful. If any one considers it below dignity, so much the worse for him. In the olden days great scholars, and dignitaries were glad to perform these functions for life long.

There is a doubt as to whether the Apostle of God (peace be on him) himself called the Azan or not. One group says that he did call the Azan. They cite the Tradition from the compilation of Tirmizi. Nawavi and Suhaili and other great scholars like them are among those who rely on the Traditions and hold this view. But the correct view is that the Apostle of

God himself did not call the Azan. The Tradition is *Tirmizi's* compilation indicates that Hadrath called the Azan by order of the Apostle of God. It is clarified in the compilation *Musnad-e-Ahmad*. However, the Apostle has invoked God's blessings for them.

"Oh God bless the Imam with guidance and bless the Muazzin."

Abu Hurairah says that we were with the Apostle of God (peace be on him) when Bilal stood up and called the Azan. After the Azan the Prophet said, "Whoever repeats these words with conviction and faithful will enter heaven."

Application

Another Tradition says that the holy Prophet also said, "Whoever repeats the words of Azan in response to the Muazzin's call and after that recites *Dua-e-Mathura* has his place high and I hope he will be with me in heaven."

All the words of the Azan are repeated except that in response to the words, *HAYYA-ALAS-SALAH* and *HAYYA-ALAL-FALAH* when the hearers responds with words *LA-HAOLA-WA-LA-QUWWATA-ILLA-BILLAH*. In the call for morning prayer the Muazzin calls "*AS-SALATU-KHAIRUM-MENAN-NAUM*" after the words *HAYYA-ALAL-FALAH*. In response to that the hearer should say : *SADAQTA-WA-BARARTA-WA-BIL-HAQQ-I-NA-TAQTA*.

This response should be given by every one who is not handicapped for any reason e.g. he may be in the toilet, may be in the act of urinating or co-habiting or in the act of performing *Salat*. Such a person is not required to respond to Azan. Similarly the man who is hearing *Khutba* or is busy in studies, or in teaching, taking meal, is not required to repeat the words of Muazzin's call. A woman in menstrual period is also among the handicapped who is not required to respond.

The words of *Takbir* have also to be repeated like the words of Azan. In response to the words *QAD-QAMAT-IS-SALAH* the hearers should say *AQAMAHALLAH-U-WADAMAHA*.

The Decorum and the Formalities of Azan

1. The words of the Azan should be called slowly while those of *Takbir* would be called rapidly (but not so fast that the words are not properly articulated).

- 2. It is necessary for the Muazzin to know the timing of the Salat, preferable moments and the directions of Qibla.**
- 3. One should not cry himself hoarse while calling Azan.**
- 4. If some one else calls the Azan in the Muazzin's absence he should not be annoyed at it.**
- 5. One should call the Azan in a loud and agreeable melodious voice but not like a song.**
- 6. One should call the Azan for the sake of God's pleasure. He should not behave as if he obliged some one, nor should he charge any remuneration for calling Azan.**
- 7. He should commend good and pious acts and denounce the undesirable acts. He should not discriminate between the rich and the poor in speaking out what is right.**
- 8. He should wait for a short while for the Imam to commence Salat (after calling Azan) so that the congregation does not feel bored and restless.**
- 9. If some one sits at the place which the Muazzin usually occupies he should not get angry.**
- 10. He should not perform lengthy supplication after Azan. Waiting for commencement of the prayer wearies the congregation.**
- 11. He should protect the mosque in every manner.**
- 12. The Muazzin should be male, major, of sound mind and conversant with necessary rules of Shariah.**
- 13. He should be God-fearing and follower of the rules of Shariah.**
- 14. He should be conversant with the conditions of life of the men of congregation and he should be able to pull up people for default in attending the congregational prayers. Caution : In so doing he should take care that he does not hurt the feelings of the congregation.**
- 15. He should have a loud voice.**
- 16. He should be regular and punctual in calling the Azan.**
- 17. He should stand on a high place for calling the Azan so that his call reaches out quite far.**
- 18. The Azan should not be called from within the mosque. If there is a platform for calling the Azan he should use to it otherwise any other place outside the mosque.**

19. Azan should be called in the prescribed words in Arabic language without any addition or alteration.
20. Azan cannot be called in any language other than Arabic.
21. The Muazzin should be facing towards Qibla while calling the Azan and Takbir. Not to follow this essential requirement is odious and disallowed (*Makrooh*).
22. The Muazzin should turn his face to his right when he calls *HAYYA-ALAS-SALAH* and to his left when he calls *HAYYA-ALAL-FALAH*. But his feet should be firmly in their place.
23. He should put his index fingers of his hands in his ears. It is not enough just to keep the index fingers on the ears; these should be inserted in the ears.
24. It is odious and disallowed (*Makrooh*) not to have time gap between the Azan and Takbir. The time gap should be equivalent to the time taken in the performance of two or four *Rak'ats*.
25. Each *Rak'at* should take so much time that one may recite ten verses of the Qur'an in that time period.
26. One should not talk while calling the Azan, if he does it he will have to call the Azan again from the beginning.
27. The Azan should be called at an early hour of the time of prayer so that the residents of the locality may conveniently reach the mosque.
28. After the Azan one should wait for the residents of the locality (who usually attend the congregation) but this waiting should not be reserved only for the rich and influential persons.
29. Azan should be called for the *Fardh* prayer five times a day and for Juma prayer which is also *Fardh*. Azan is not required for *Sunnah*, *Nafil* and *Wajib* prayers.
30. Azan should be called standing, calling the Azan sitting is odious and disallowed (*Makrooh*).
31. Calling the Azan on horse back is objectionable except when he is a traveller actually riding a horse at that time.
32. One Muazzin should call the Azan in one mosque only. It is disallowed for a man to call the Azan in several mosques.
33. After the Azan for Maghrib one should wait for a while before commencing Takbir for prayer, long enough for reciting three short verses of Qur'an or one long verse.

34. If the order of phrases in the Azan is altered by mistake it should be corrected.
35. It is common belief that Azan should be called from a place on the left side of the mosque and Takbir on the right side. There is no basis in *Shariah* for such a belief.
36. Some people think or act in a way as if it is not permitted to cross in front of some one while he is calling the Azan or some one when he is busy in supplication (Du'a).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PURPOSE OF AN ORDERLY CONGREGATION

NATURAL ORDER OF UNITY

The purpose of an orderly congregation would have remained unfulfilled if the congregation had not been properly organised. The Prophet (peace be on him) enlightened his companions and followers on the minutest details of the congregational set up for prayers. Indeed these congregations are complete units at each level and serve as training ground and model for an organised life in the mundane affairs also.

It is a unique system which is built on very solid grounds. The individual has to identify himself completely with the congregation and follow the Imam in every move of the prayers and listen to his sermon before the Friday prayers and after the Id prayers. The individual has been stopped from making his motions of standing, bowing or prostrating differently from the Imam's or in advance of him. All possible loop-holes have been plugged so as not to allow the individual's ego any chance of asserting itself. The holy Apostle of God had given clear orders that whenever there are two or more persons at a place, one of them should be selected to act as Imam. "When there are three persons one of them should lead the rest. And the man with greater learning (among those present) is entitled to be the Imam."

Malik Ibn Huwarith alongwith his cousin came to the holy Prophet. On mention of a journey the holy Prophet told them : "When you two go on a journey call the Azan and Aqamat during the journey and whoever is elder amongst you should lead the congregational prayer."

STRENGTH IN UNITY

When an Imam is chosen he should be followed in every motion that he makes: when he recites the Qur'an and Allah's praises every one should listen in rapt attention and remain respectfully standing erect, when the Imam bows before God Almighty all the congregation should bow and repeat the words acknowledging the greatness of God, the Almighty Creator and Preserver. Then when the Imam prostrates every one in the congregation should place his forehead on the ground and proclaim by act and deed his humility and should recite praises of Allah.

The Prophet (peace be on him) has said, "The Imam is chosen for being followed. The true meaning of following is that the follower should do exactly what the Imam does. He cannot make any motion ahead of the Imam nor against the Imam's motion."

"Do not move ahead of the Imam. When he calls, Takbir you also repeat it, when he recites Surah Fatiha and utters the last word '*Waladhdhallin*' you should say '*Amin*'; when the Imam bows in *Ruku* you also bow and when he says *Sami-Allaho-Liman-Hamidah* you should say *Rabbana-Lakal-Hamd*."

If any body makes a move contrary to the move of the Imam or before the Imam does it, then on principle he remains no more a part of the congregation of followers and he stands exposed to the wrath of God and penalty for his default.

The Prophet (peace be on him) himself said, "A man who raises his head (from prostrate position) before the Imam raises his own, why does he not fear that his head would be turned into a donkey's head." The default may appear to be minor. Why then the penalty is so severe? The reason is that by this apparently minor default the man has opted out of the law of God and placed his head in the hands of the devil.

Any man of the congregation who raises his head or bows before the Imam does, his forehead is in the hands of the devil. What more grievous penalty could be thought of. The rationale for making this penalty severe was to impress deeply upon the minds of the faithful the significance and importance of the system which knits the faithful into a disciplined and united force and that benefits lie in following the leader completely.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) personally enforced this aspect of following the Imam. Anas says, "One day the holy Prophet (peace be on him) led the prayers; after the prayers he addressed us and said, "O man!

do not move ahead of (the Imam in *Ruku*, *Sajda*, *Qayam* and *Insrafi*). I see you behind my back as clearly as I see in front of me." That the Prophet watched the followers and warned them of the default and emphasised the proper performance signifies the importance and benefits of properly and implicitly following the leader in all actions in the prayers.

The companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) had fully grasped the significance of the Prophet's words and wisdom of these instructions and followed them completely. Bara Ibn Aziz says : "We performed prayers behind the Prophet scrupulously following his motion; when he called *Sami-Allaho-Liman-Hammidah* we stood erect and did not so much as bend our backs for falling into prostration (*Sajda*) until the Prophet's forehead had touched the ground in *Sajda*."

Abdullah bin Umar once saw a man making his motions ahead of the Imam in prayers. He told that man that the Salat he said was neither individually performed nor with the Imam. He punished him and asked him to repeat the Salat.

Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal (God be please with him) has cited a Tradition that the Prophet had prophesied that a time will come when man will perform prayer but it will not be properly performed. The Imam goes on to say, "I fear that the prophesy of the holy Prophet might apply in our own times. I have performed prayers in hundreds of mosques. Nowhere did I find men performing the prayer properly and in the way in which the Prophet and his companions performed prayers. O men, fear God, perform your prayers carefully and take care of your fellow men's prayers too, so that they offer the prayers with full rites duly performed. Listen ! even if a person himself says his Salat properly with all rites duly performed but he notices another man not performing the prayer properly with all rites and requisites, and he does not point out the mistakes nor does he try to correct him then he will be taken as a party to that other man's faults. He will be a defaulter on account of the other man's defaults although he had performed the prayer properly for himself."

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CORRECTING OTHERS

The faithful are not only duly bound for conducting themselves properly in all actions of prayer and life in general but they are also answerable for ensuring the proper conduct of the other faithfuls. The distinguishing feature of the faithful is that they "order good conduct and restrain men from the evil."

"Ye are the best of people evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong." (Al-Qur'an III-110)

The life of the companions of the Prophet (God may be pleased with them) was a glorious example of this distinguished way of life.

It is common knowledge that when those who know do not guide others nor stop them from the wrongful acts, the harmful effects of such misguided and wrongful acts grip the society like an epidemic. Those who know will have to answer why they did not correct the erring when they saw them going astray and why did they keep quiet. This duty is enjoined not only on the Traditional scholars, the Ulama, who have graduated from a Madrasa, but on every faithful Muslim to the extent of his ability. In the early days of Islam the companions of the Prophet spread the message of Islam with this spirit as the guiding light. It is necessary that this spirit is revived and brought into play. The faults in the performance of prayer which are commonly prevalent among the men should be pointed out and corrected according to the prescribed procedure and practice.

Imam Ghazali has dealt with this problem at length in his famous book "*Ahya-ul-Ulum*" Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has also discussed this problem in detail in the Chapter on Salat.

THE FORMATION OF THE CONGREGATION

Every member of the congregation must follow the Imam completely with full sense of responsibility. It is enjoined upon every one in the congregation to follow the Imam completely and not to deviate in the smallest measure. It is enjoined that whenever there are two or more Muslims offering prayer they should make one of them an Imam who should stand ahead of the others and the others should stand in straight rows so that their shoulders touch each other; their eyes should be fixed in front at the spot where their forehead would be when they prostrate, they should hold their hands all alike. They should all be facing the Qibla, that is in the direction of the holy Ka'ba in Makkah Mukarramah. The rows should be straight in a manner that if some one were to draw a straight line from one end to the other along the row there may not occur a slightest curve. So much for the form and appearance. Alongwith the form and appearance the faithful should also have purity of mind and soul and the mind should be full of fear and love of God. The faithful should have a feeling that he is in the audience of the Almighty and even though he may not see God, God is watching him.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) always laid great emphasis on keeping the rows straight and did not permit the slightest irregularity in the rows. He personally supervised that the people stand in straight rows. It was his custom that he inspected the rows before commencing the prayer and ensured that these were straight. He pulled up those who made the rows irregular. It happened one day that the Prophet came to the mosque for prayers and took his place at the head of the congregation. He was just about to say Takbir to commence the prayer that his eyes fell on a fellow whose chest was bulging out ahead of others in the row. At this the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "O' bondmen of Allah, either you make your rows straight or Allah will spread rift in your midst." Irregularities in appearance and any hint of precedence of one over the other lead to irregularities in the mental attitudes, create a distance between fellow faithfuls and these attitudes in turn lead to jealousy, hatred and enmity which disrupt the life of the Society and lower the dignity of the faith and the faithful. Moreover disobedience of rules of Shariah in one sphere leads to blur the vision and cause disruption all round.

BENEFITS OF REGULAR ROWS

The congregation feels the rapture of Salat (prayer) and their hearts are filled with enlightenment when they stand in straight rows and close ranks. "Make the rows regular and straight because this is an essential ingredient of perfect Salat."

In this natural order of the congregational prayer system the followers are asked to stand behind the Imam like an organised army and meticulously follow the signals from the Imam. They should not allow any deviation or disturbance or irregularity in the slightest measure to creep into their ranks when they stand to offer their supplications before the Almighty Allah. A sense of being in the audience of the Almighty pervades the whole congregation and evil thoughts do not find any loop-hole to creep in."

"Truly God loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure." (Al-Qur'an LXI-4).

Nowhere there should appear any loop-hole in this iron wall of the congregation so that the inner beings of the followers become integrated as if it were a single entity and the (Imam) leader does not have occasion to say "How is it, I see you divided ?"

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) has explained everything in detail

and at length. He has also made personal demonstration for people to understand and follow the directives.

"Stand close to each other and do not have distance in between for it will cause differences in your hearts."

"Do not indulge in noise like those in a market while you arrange your rows for prayer."

"Make your rows straight and regular, stand close to each other, shoulder to shoulder. By God, I see the Satan creeping in through the vacant space in a row."

When one ponders over these matters and looks for the material and spiritual gains, one will realise what great benefits flow from these rules.

Nearness to the Imam

The nearness to God is related to and based upon the place occupied by the men in the rows. The man who is nearer to the Imam will be entitled to higher rewards. In other words, he will be the privileged one. There is a saying of Prophet (peace be on him), that 'Allah's blessings start from the Imam and then spread all over and encompass all the rows.'

"Allah's blessings on the congregation in the mosque descend first on the Imam and then spread on his right and then encompass all the rows."

It therefore transpires that the first row which is nearer the Imam has precedence over other rows. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If people knew and believed the privileged position of the first row and of Azan, they would strive for it, even if it were to be had through drawing of lots.

Who should Stand Near Imam

Those persons should take their place near the Imam who have the requisite qualifications of leading the congregation so that they may step into the Imam's place if and when required. It has also been hinted in a Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) which says, "Those among you who are wise and learned should be near me and then those who are comparable to them.

Spiritual Elevation

In a way it is an incentive to the faithful to reach the mosque early and try to take a place in the first row thereby earning maximum rewards

for prayer. These Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) show that the order of the mosques leads, step by step, to the elevation of the soul, it provides rehearsal and training exercises for the crusade (*Jihad*) in its widest meaning (and not restricted to military action only). The Imam has been given a place of honour as a leader and the lesson of love and respect for the Imam has been taught.

The Congregation Leads to Equality and Fraternity

The insistence on the proper formation of rows in the congregational prayers (and meticulous following of every move of the Imam) completely obliterates the pride of place to any individual or group. It initiates the collective life, teaches equality, fairness and fraternity which are precepts of prime importance in Islam.

Islam disapproves of man's ego both in principle and in practice. Islam does not brook disharmony, contradictions and dissensions, unity and solidarity of the Ummah are part of the ethos of Islam.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) expressed his displeasure if he saw any one standing alone, separately from the congregational row or away from the congregation. Once he noticed some one offering Salat alone, behind the congregational row. He rebuked that man and asked him to repeat his Salat (for the Salat said individually when others were holding the congregational prayer was not a duly performed Salat.).

Selection of the Imam

A man who is selected for leading the congregational prayer, which is the highest form of prayer and which is the second of the five pillars of Islam, has to be free from all faults of character, bad habits and traits which are disapproved by the Shariah. He should be a man of sterling qualities, of ideal character of God-fearing.

The man who is to lead us before God should be selected with great care and attention. Let not heredity, family connections and caste considerations have any weight in the choice of the Imam; nor should the financial status influence the people. In selecting the Imam we should be free from all such considerations and the only guiding light should be what is contained in the holy Qur'an and the Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). The holy Prophet (peace be on him) himself graced this office and enhanced the dignity of this office. He continued to perform the duties of this high office almost till the end of his life so long as he enjoyed physical strength to perform the duty.

In this connection Tabari makes a significant observation :—

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) led the congregational prayers even during illness so that no Imam should make illness an excuse for avoiding the duties of this high office.

When the holy Prophet (peace be on him) became absolutely helpless during his last illness and fits of fainting recurred inspite of his best efforts, he nominated for officiating in his place someone who was admittedly the best person among his companions and followers. He nominated Abu Bakr. Some of the wives of the holy Prophet suggested the name of Omar and repeat the suggestion but the Prophet (peace be on him) declined to accept the suggestion and expressed his displeasure at their audacity. Abu Bakr officiated for the Prophet (peace be on him) in leading the congregational prayers.

Aisha (God be pleased with her) narrates this episode of the holy Prophet's last illness thus :—

The Prophet (peace be on him) asked for water for *Wadhu* three times but each time he fainted. When he lost hope of going to the mosque he sent word to Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him) to lead the congregation. When the messenger delivered this message Abu Bakr said to Omar, "O Omar lead the people in prayer." Omar replied, "You are more worthy of this task." Abu Bakr then led the congregational prayers.

Imam should be Well Versed in Theology

The Prophet (peace be on him) and his companions have made it clear that leading the congregation in prayer is the privilege of the best person among the congregation and this responsibility should be entrusted to the man who is worthy of it in every manner and is distinguished for his learning and dignity. This is why the eminent scholars of theology have given first place to the scholar among those worthy of leading the congregation.

Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani says, "Sometime a problem arises during Salat which can be solved only by someone who is fully conversant with *Fiqh*, that is way the Prophet preferred Abu Bakr over others for leading the congregational prayers, although in the matter of reciting the Qur'an, he had placed someone else superior to Abu Bakr; the Prophet (peace be on him) had called *Ubi* the master in the recitation of Qur'an.

The Imam should be conversant with the matters relating to Salat so that he is able to perform Salat properly with due attention to all requisites. The Hafiz who has only learnt the Qur'an by heart or the Qari who has

learned the art of recitation of the Qur'an but is not conversant with the requisites of Salat well enough, does not have precedence over a scholar of theology. The contrary popular notion is misconceived on a faulty understanding of the holy Prophet's (peace be on him) Tradition.

Importance of the Leader of Congregational Prayer during the Days of the Companions

We have seen in the foregoing pages that the holy Prophet attached great importance to the leadership of congregational prayer. The companions of the Prophet followed his guidance. Omar personally led the congregational prayer throughout his period of Caliphate (Khilafat). He met his death while on way to lead the congregational prayers. The governors chosen by him for the provinces were worthy persons in all respects and qualified to lead the congregation. Othman and Ali (may God be pleased with them) also led the congregation personally. They appointed governors who were qualified to lead the congregation and they did perform this duty. It was part of the duty of the governor to lead the congregational prayers.

Commenting on the reign of the first four Caliphs, an English author Thomas Arnold says : "The Caliph had dual powers both religious and temporal. On the religious side the object of his government was to protect the religion. As a defender of the faith he waged wars against infidels, awarded punishment to those who in any way damaged the faith. To lead the congregational prayers and to deliver the address on Friday noon prayers was also part of his official duty."

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) says of the Imam's function, "The Imam is the protector and the Muazzin is the trustee. O Allah enlighten and guide the *Imams* and bless the *Muazzins*."

Imam Ahmad on the Choice of Imam

Deliberating on the holy Prophet's Traditions on the subject Imam Ahmad says, "The Musalmans should choose such persons as their Imams who are best amongst them and firm in their faith and conduct. The best are those who are knowledgeable and have faith and their heart is filled with awe of the majesty of Allah."

He goes on to say, "When the leadership of the congregation is assigned to someone inferior in calibre and a man of superior faculty stands behind him as a follower in the congregation, the community remains backward."

Responsibilities of the Imam

It is incumbent on the Imam that if the community disputes his leadership as an Imam because of some fault or default (in his conduct) he should abstain from leading the congregation, for it is doubtful that his prayers will be rewarded by Allah. The holy Prophet's Traditions (peace be on him) says : "Allah does not answer the prayers of three (types of) persons: One, whom the people (of the congregation) do not like, second, the man who comes late to the mosque and misses the congregation prayers and third, the man who puts a free man in bondage of slavery."

We need to ponder over these Traditions of the holy Prophet and see how far removed we are from what the Traditions demand of us.

The Post of Imam in the Present Times

It is therefore necessary that this practice is revived and in every mosque such Imams are appointed who are worthy of the position. They should have the requisite qualifications and be worthy of being the leader of the community.

Some time back (in early nineteenth century) Syed Ahmad Shaheed Bareilvi (may God bless him) paid attention to this matter and tried to revive the Tradition. He made it a point to appoint a worthy Imam in each mosque, one who possessed requisite qualifications. He made him responsible, as a leader, for the community living in the neighbourhood of the mosque where he had the congregation prayers. Of the many mosques spread over any area he named one as Jama Masjid and gave the Imam of that Masjid the status of a District Judge.

The Tazkare-e-Sadiqa records as follows :

"It was necessary for the reform of people and for saving them from adjudication of their disputes by aliens that on the one hand people should be dissuaded from quarrelling among themselves, the spirit of fair play and justice be infused among them, and on the other some mechanism be evolved for settling disputes and complicated matters. The holy Prophet's Tradition says, Resort to consultations in your affairs."

So he (Syed Ahmad Shaheed) appointed Imams where there were mosques. Where there were no mosques, he got them built and appointed Imams. These Imams were made responsible for deciding disputes. In an area of four to five kilometer (about of 3 square miles) he named one of the mosques as Jama Masjid and appointed a learned and pious man as

Imam. This Imam was considered to be the Sessions Judge. If people were not satisfied with his Judgments then, on the request of the people, he (Syed Ahmed Shaheed) went there personally and settled the disputes and assuaged the feelings of the people. Syed Ahmad Shaheed had grasped the significance of the order of the mosques very well and wished to revive the spirit of the order which had long been in decay. Would that Muslims realise the importance of the order of the mosques and adopted it again in their daily lives.

To sum up, the Imam should be one who is learned, pious and God-fearing, one imbued with a sense of responsibility. For his responsibilities are great indeed. He is the head of the congregation and leads it before God supplicating for His mercy and blessings. If he performs his duties with a sense of responsibility, sincerity and with devotion he will be rewarded by God in life eternal and also in this world. But if he does not exert himself in the performance of his duties, then he is doomed to failure in this world and to eternal damnation.

Inspection of the Rows

Before commencing the congregational prayer the Imam should see whether the rows are in order as prescribed by the rules of *Shariah*. The follower is also duty-bound to stand properly in the rows according to rules. The holy Prophet himself inspected and where necessary corrected the rows of the congregation before he commenced the prayer.

Noman Ibn-Bashir says, "The holy Prophet put our rows in order when we stood for prayer and only when the rows had been arranged properly then he commenced prayer. He looked to his right and left and said, 'Stand erect and make your rows in order according to *Shariah*.'"

Hazl. Abbas says, "The holy Prophet (peace be on him) looked to his right and said: 'Stand properly and arrange your rows properly.' He then looked to his left and said, 'Stand properly and arrange your rows.'"

This the Prophet did personally. Besides, he had assigned to Bilal (may God be pleased with him) the duty to get the rows properly arranged. Bilal used to get the rows arranged in proper order and used his lash until the heels of every one in a row were in line. The companions kept alive to this Tradition and attached great importance to it. Caliph Omar invariably inspected the rows and commenced prayer only after correcting the rows. He too had also deputed one man to attend to this task.

Consideration for the Members of the Congregation

Thus after the rows have been properly formed, the Imam should lead the congregation with a full sense of responsibility. He should take note of the capacity of his followers. There are all types of men in the congregation including old men, ailing persons and those who are weak and infirm. The Imam should have due consideration for their limited capacity to stand in prayer for long. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When you lead a congregational prayer, you should make it brief, for there are ailing persons and old men too in the congregation. But when you pray individually you may prolong the prayer as much as you like."

The Prophet made the Prayers Brief

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) was himself very considerate. On hearing the cry of a child he concluded the prayer rather quickly. This Tradition relates to the period when women were permitted to attend the mosque. Even otherwise the Prophet did not conduct prolonged prayers so that the followers never got bored and their concentration was not disturbed. Anas has narrated: "I have never enjoyed a prayer so brief and so perfect as in the congregation led by the holy Prophet (peace be on him)"

Instructions for the Imam

The holy Prophet expressed his displeasure on hearing a complaint that some Imams made long recitations in prayers which bored the followers and were reluctant to join the congregation. Once a companion narrated to the holy Prophet that he abstained from joining the congregation of morning prayer because of lengthy recitation by the Imam there. The companions have narrated that on the hearing this the holy Prophet (peace be on him) was so much annoyed that they had not seen him so annoyed before. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "There are some among you who spread disaffections. Whosoever among you leads a congregation should make the prayers brief and light, for in the congregation there are old and infirm men and others in need (of attending to other matters after the prayers.)"

A similar incident relating to Ma'az is narrated in the Traditions. He used to make long recitations in prayers. It is true that long recitation of the holy Qur'an was permitted and in those early days of Islamic fervour it was in keeping with the mood of the people. But this long recitation was hard on someone who earned his livelihood by manual labour. When the news reached the holy Prophet (peace be on him) he said, "O" Ma'az,

how is it ? You are spreading evil." Uthman bin-al-as says that the last undertaking taken from him by the Prophet was that while leading a congregation he would conduct the prayer lightly according to the approved practice of the Sunnah.

The Meaning of Light Prayer

It should not be concluded from the foregoing that recitation of Qur'anic verses and other supplications should be omitted and due formalities be dispensed with or the compulsory requisites may be abridged. In an atmosphere of disinterest in faith and laxity in prayers, people are misled in grasping the meaning of light prayers.

This aspect has been elaborately dealt in the Shariah. It is not left open to one's imagination or opinion or to the habit and custom of local people or groups or to the opinion of the Imam or followers. How the holy Prophet (peace be on him) performed and conducted the prayers is described with full details in the books of the Traditions. We have seen in the Tradition related by Anas (may God be pleased with him) that the most perfect prayer which was at the same time also light was the one he performed in the congregation led by the holy Prophet (peace be on him). The details of the verses recited by the holy Prophet in various prayers five times a day are also recorded in the books of the Traditions.

Jabir bin Saumrah (may God be pleased with him) narrated : "The holy Prophet (peace be on him) recited Surah *Qaaf Wal Qur'an-il-Majeed* and similar other Surahs and his prayers were light."

Omar bin Harith says that the holy Prophet was heard reciting the Surah *Wallaili-Iza-As'as* (in the morning prayer). Abdullah bin Saib says, "The holy Prophet (peace be on him) led the pre-dawn congregational prayer in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. He recited Surah *Muminoon*. When he reached the story of Musa and Haroon or the story of Jesus, he got an attack of coughing; he went into Ruku at that point." Abu Harairah says, "On Fridays the holy Prophet (peace be on him) recited in morning prayer the Surah *Alif Lalm Meem* and in the second Rakat *Hal Ala*. From these Traditions we can very well understand how much recitation may be done in the Fajr prayer following the practice of the holy Prophet.

Recitation at Noon and After-noon prayers

Abu Saeed Khudri describing what he and his friends had guessed about the recitation by the Prophet (since the recitations at *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers are not loudly made and could not be heard by the followers in the

congregation) narrates, "We used to guess as regards the recitation by the holy Prophet (peace be on him). We estimated that the holy Prophet recited verses equal in length to *Alif Lam Meem Tanzil* in the first two Rak'ats.' Another Tradition says that he recited the thirty verses in each Rak'at. Jabir Bin Saumrah says that in the *Zuhr* prayer the holy prophet recited *Wal-Lail-i-Iza*. Another Tradition says he recited *Wal-Lail-i-Iza*.... or the same length of verses in the *Asr* prayers and much longer in the *Fajr* prayers.

In the *Maghrib* prayers the holy Prophet recited *Surah Tur* and sometimes *Surah Mursalat*.

The currently common notion of making the recitations brief is misconceived. The above quoted Traditions of the holy Prophet indicate what the holy Prophet meant by light prayers.

Abdullah says that the holy Prophet directed to perform light prayers and the illustration he cites is that he (the holy Prophet — peace be upon him) recited *Suratul Saff* in the prayer. Now let us see how the verses should be recited and how the holy Prophet (peace be on him) recited them.

First let us note the postulate of the holy Qur'an itself. It says : "And recite the Qur'an in slow, measured, rhythmic tones." The holy Prophet (peace be on him) followed this completely. He never recited the verses so fast that the words were not properly articulated or the listener did not understand them.

Umme-e-Salma (may God be pleased with her) says, "The holy Prophet uttered each word separately. He did not let one verse run into another and did not mix the verses. Huzaifa says he attended the congregational prayer led by the holy Prophet (peace be on him). He recited the Qur'an in a moderate voice, neither low nor loud; he articulated the words slowly and followed the rules of recitation.

Hafsah says about the recitation of the holy Prophet "When he recited any verse he recited it in slow measured tone which made verse appear as lengthy." Umme-e-Salma says that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) articulated every letter distinctly and separately.

Once Abu Bakr recited *Surah Baqar* in the morning prayer. When people said to him that (because of the time taken in recitation of this long *Surah*) sun was about to rise, he replied that he was not oblivious of the rising of the sun (i.e. he was mindful of finishing the prayer before sunrise).

Omar also followed these Traditions. It is narrated that he recited Surah Nahl, Hud, Yunus, Bani Israil and such other long Surahs in the morning prayers.

Alqamah says, "I have prayed with Abdullah bin Mas'ud (may God be pleased with him); he recited the Qur'an and articulated the words distinctly," Similarly about Abdullah bin Abbas it is said that when in the late night (*Isha*) prayers he recited the Qur'an he articulated the words separately and distinctly. Abdullah bin Masud says, "Do not recite the Qur'an like a poem." Abdullah bin Abbas explains the verse cited on previous page that it means "articulate the words clearly and distinctly."

When time permits long Surahs may be recited as indicated by the Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). Under compelling circumstances or pressing needs the recitation may be cut short. The holy Prophet himself recited the two last Surahs (which are short Surahs) in the Fajr prayer.

Oqba bin Amir says, "I was holding the camels bridle of the holy Prophet when he (the Prophet) expounded the benefits of the last two Surahs of the holy Qur'an, the *Muawwazain*, and taught them to me. Then to please me, he recited the same two Surahs in the *Fajr* prayer and after prayer he asked me, "How did you find it?"

Alongwith the proper recitation it is also necessary that the different steps in the prayer are properly performed i.e. *Ruku*, *Sajda*, *Qayam* and *Qa'da* are performed with calm and peace of mind. Anas narrates that the holy Prophet rising from *Ruku* used to remain standing so long that we thought he had forgotten to perform *sajda*. Then he used to prostrate (perform *Sajda*) and between the two *Sajdas* he remained sitting so long that we suspected that he was absorbed in some thoughts.

Bra narrates that the holy Prophet took equal time in *Ruku*, *Sajda* and sitting between two *Sajdas* and standing after *Ruku* except in *Qayam*. (The time taken in *Qayam* depended on the recitation of verses which have been discussed at length in the preceeding pages.)

Anas narrated that the prayers of Umar bin Abdul Aziz were very much like the prayers of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) and that his *Ruku* and *Sajda* each were long enough that one could repeat the words of praise of God ten times in the duration.

Once Anas demonstrated how the holy Prophet used to perform the prayer on which Thabit remarked, 'But I do not see you performing the prayer like this (every day).' In the demonstrative prayer when he (Anas)

has stood up after Ruku he remained standing so long that one might say he forgot to take the next step in prayers and similarly while sitting after the first Sajda he took so long that one thought he had forgotten the next step."

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "The worst among men is one who steals prayer." The companions asked how could one steal prayer? The holy Prophet (peace be on him) replied, "Not performing the *Ruku* and *Sajda* properly is theft of prayer."

That is why some leading theologians consider the proper timing in performance of the different steps of prayer as compulsory (*Fardh*) and in any case these are essentially incumbent. Thus all these Traditions need to be kept in view in understanding the real sense of 'light' prayer. It is necessary to give due consideration to the convenience of the followers in the congregation but not at the cost of the essential requisites of proper performance of the different steps of the prayer. That is why we said that the Imam carries a great responsibility on him and his task is very delicate. He should conscientiously discharge his duty.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PURIFICATION OF THE HEART

With so much emphasis on the external details of the prayer as we have seen in the foregoing Chapter it is obvious that the spiritual aspect of this performance should be all the more elaborately dealt with.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Listen ! There is a piece of flesh in the body the purification of which keeps all the body pure and its damage impairs the whole body and that is the heart."

At the time of prayer a state of piety should overwhelm the heart and the whole congregation should feel that it is standing in audience before the Almighty who is watching them; he knows of their actions and movements as well as their heartbeats and their thoughts.

"When you pray you should feel as if you are seeing Him or in any case He is watching you."

When this thought grips the supplicant then as soon as he says (Allah-o-Akbar) to commence his prayer he finds himself in audience before the Almighty Allah and feels the hallow of His glory and grace over-spreading towards him and the beams of celestial light brightening his mind and heart. This state of mind is called (Khushu and Khudhu) and this is the essence of prayer. The holy Qur'an says :—

"The Believers must (eventually win through those who humble themselves in their prayers.)" (Al-Qur'an XXIII-1.)

This verse clarifies that this state of mind, although it is not an essential condition of the performance of prayer, it nevertheless is a condition precedent for acceptance by Almighty Allah of the supplication and prayer. Salat will be considered as duly performed if the external requisites are duly fulfilled. But whether the prayer and supplication receive approval and acceptance by God will depend on the degree of absorption and single

mindful devotion in prayer. Some commentators have elaborated the point. Ibn Rajab Hanbali says, "The essence of (*Khushu*) is tenderness of heart and a mellowed feeling. A sense of peace and contentment pervades the mind which brings the body to the same state of acquiescence." At the same time there is an anxiety as to whether all the piety and devotion and the performance of rituals will be accepted and rewarded by God. When the heart turns to God in humility and obeisance the whole body, each limb, bows and prostrates in the presence of Almighty. It is true that mind controls the body. The purity or impurity of the mind affects the performance of the body and the effects of (*Khushu*) appear first of all on the mind or heart.

Hazrat Ali (may God be pleased with him) said, (*Khushu*) means a sense of humility overwhelming the heart. This feeling then spreads from the heart over the whole body. Hasan Basri (may God be pleased with him) says humility originates in the heart. When this happens the eyes are cast down and man bows in humility. Some pious men of the past have therefore said that if you find someone playing with his clothes during *Salat* take it that humility has not touched his heart. How does one attain this state of humility? It is an important question today but it did not arise at all for those who were imbued with the spirit of faith and devotion. Humility came to them naturally, pervaded their lives and all the more so during the *Salat*. The attainment of this state of mind during *Salat* has become difficult for the people today because of lack of faith and devotion. Otherwise, if we attended to the evaluation of the mind as much as we attend to the external requisites of prayer it would be a simple matter to feel the exaltation of mind. This state of mind pervades the heart if one enters the mosque with rekindled faith and with an awareness that he is going in for an audience before God Almighty. Before him is a vision of the hallow of His Majesty and a realisation that He is watching His faithful bondmen, both the exterior as well as the inner most feelings of their hearts are known to him, that on the pronouncement of *Allah-o-Akbar* he has for a while broken all mundane ties has become oblivious of every thing around except his contact with God and is completely absorbed and lost in the Majesty of his audience. This awareness and faith will cleanse the heart of all the dust and rust that accumulates around the heart in the course of daily life, will make it pure and when the bondmen pronounce the verse "*Rabbil-alameen; ARahman ARahim, Malik-i-Yaumiddin*" his heart will be brimming with humility and when he pronounces, '*Iyyak-a-Na'bud-u-wa-Iyyak-a-Nastain*' the heart will experience that feeling of His Majesty and hope and yet fear for he does not know whether he will be rewarded or some default has vitiated all his purity and specification. His heart will be reaching out of exalted heights,

engulfed though he will be with humility and awe. Thus on the completion of Salat he shall have passed through the great experience of ecstasy and he shall feel like repeating what the holy Prophet said, "Prayer has been made the coolness of my eyes". Whatever hurdles come in the way of attaining this state of complete absorption in Salat should be removed and nothing should be allowed to distract one's mind.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) once told Aisha (may God be pleased with her) that looking this side and that during the prayer is due to the trick played by Satan (the devil) to deprive the bondman of the essence of the Salat. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) avoided such things as caused distraction of mind during Salat. Once Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) hung a nice thin curtain on the door. When the holy Prophet got up to perform Salat he told her "Remove this painted curtain from my sight." Once the holy Prophet performed Salat when he was wearing a printed sheet of cloth. Immediately after Salat he sent it away to (someone) and got a plain cloth for himself. He said the printed cloth had distracted his attention. Thus did the holy Prophet conduct himself during Salat and told his followers not to allow any distraction to come in their way. For example, if one is hungry and food is served, let him first eat and then perform Salat. Let not one look towards the sky or sideways during Salat. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) also said that when one feels the pressure of call of nature let him first ease himself and then perform Salat.

The order to face the Qibla during Salat is an important factor. On the one hand it makes the congregational prayer uniform and integrated and on the other hand it provides the necessary mechanism for a spiritual and mental exaltation of the whole congregation. We may briefly say that on commencing the Salat one isolates himself from his surroundings. Spiritually, his inner self is inflamed by his conscious devotion to God and by driving out all extraneous thoughts from mind one becomes oblivious of his surroundings. The companions of the holy Prophet and the pious men of the early days of Islam manifested such a single minded devotion in performing the Salat that their conduct became a shining example for us to emulate.

The story of a companion of the holy Prophet is narrated in Abu Daud, (Chapter of ablution with blood). He was so engrossed in prayer (Salat) that even when arrows hit him and he bled he did not terminate the Salat, and continued to pray as if nothing had happened. The story of Omar the Second Caliph (may God be pleased with him) is well known. He was leading the congregational prayer when an arrow hits him. Another man led the congregation in his place but the prayers remained undisturbed.

Abdullah bin Zubair used to be so engrossed in prayer (Salat) that an onlooker would think a wooden pillar was standing and it was being moved by the breeze.

Ibn-e-Sirin was overwhelmed in the presence of God during Salat and he turned pale with fear (of God.)

Muslim (may God bless him soul) was so engrossed and overwhelmed by the Majesty of his presence during Salat that he did not hear any sound around him.

Amir bin Abu Qais used to say that he could gladly suffer a kirage being thrust in his throat but could not bear any mundane thought during the Salat. Saeed Bin Ma'az said he had not performed any Salat during which any mundane thought had disturbed his mind. Blessed are those who perform Salat with the congregation with such devotion following the footsteps of their ideal, the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him).

A companion of the Holy Prophet says that he used to be so engrossed in the Salat that the expansion of his chest showed the emotional upsurge within the loud groans of agony rising from fear of God were clearly audible when he performed the Salat. This can be achieved only when one removes all traces of hypocrisy, self-esteem and false prestige.

CHAPTER NINE

MOSQUES AS THE HOUSE OF GOD

This universe and every thing that exists belong to God; these came into existence by His will and are under His control. There is nothing on earth which may claim its existence except by His will. But if God Himself calls something as His own the distinction and pre-eminence of the thing over the rest of the world is obvious. Such are the hallowed place which we call mosques :—

“And the places of worship are for God (alone) So invoke not any one alongwith God.”
(Al-Qur'an LXXII-18)

MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE OF THE MOSQUE

Naturally the maintenance and upkeep of something dear to the owner cannot be left in the hands of those who oppose the owner or who have no sense of commitment. Only those are entitled to maintain and serve these mosques who have love and fear of God in their heart, who would devote themselves to the service of the mosque with love and dedication, and who would feel honoured by having the privilege of serving the house of the Almighty. Only those who are perfect in their faith and pure of heart are entitled to engage in maintenance and upkeep of the mosque. God Himself has prescribed the essential requisites for those who may be considered entitled to construct a mosque. These requisites cover both the spiritual condition , the purity of mind as well as the external purity of word and deed.

“The mosques of God shall be visited and maintained by such as believe in God and the Last Day, established regular prayers and practise regular charity, and fear none (at all) except God. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.”

(Al-Qur'an IX-18)

Faith in God and faith in the Day of Judgment are the requisites of the spiritual elevation, of the pure state of mind. Performance of Salat and payment of *Zakat* are the external signs of purity. Men do sometimes make an appearance of piety and perform the acts of faith, for example, they say Salat and pay Zakat but with an ulterior motive, for gaining popularity among the people, for earning a name for piety for themselves. These acts are not prompted by sincere faith but arise from hypocrisy. God makes it clear that these signs of piety, the acts of faith, must be performed with a purity of mind, for seeking the pleasure of God and from fear of God and not for fear of anyone else. In one word it is the fear of God and God alone which is the source of all piety and purity, spiritual as well as physical. One who fulfils these requisites is entitled to construct and serve a mosque. Naturally, these essential qualities are not found in any nonbeliever, among the believers these qualities are found in varying degrees.

MEANING OF YA'MURE

The Arabic word "Ya'mure" is used in many senses. Karakhi (may God be pleased with him) says, "Ya'mure" means construction, decoration with light and flooring or carpentering, performing prayer and abstaining from mundane talk in the mosque.

SANCTITY OF THE MOSQUES

The construction of any building is not an end in itself but a means to serve some purpose. God says "He ordained that these houses (the mosques) be sanctified and respected and His praise be sung therein morning and evening." (Al-Qur'an XXIV-36). In this Ayah "Buyoot" refers to mosques. God has ordained that the sanctity of these houses be duly respected and these should reverberate with the recitation of His praise day and night. If this is not done then it amounts to not discharging the duty properly.

It must now be clear that the purpose of building a mosque is that hymns of God's praise be recited in the mosque and one should feel in their heart of heart the presence of God pervading the atmosphere there. The importance of the building can therefore be judged by the purpose that it serves.

PURITY AND EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION TO GOD

How to recite the praise of God ? Not hypocritically but with exclusive devotion to God when no other thought creeps into the mind. Indeed the prayer and Salat and remembrance of God should be with exclusive devotion and concentration wherever one may perform it, but it should be all the more so in the mosque which is His House and where His presence pervades the atmosphere.

Sincere devotion during Salat demands that the inner-most feelings of the faithful bondman be stirred to the extent that he is completely immersed in the remembrance of God, undisturbed by any other thought or feeling and quite oblivious of rest of the world. It should be so wherever one performs Salat but it has to be all the more intense when one is saying Salat in a mosque, which is God's own house and where His presence pervades and hallows the atmosphere.

This is the place where one is in communion with the Creator and this is the place which may be rightly called the 'Heaven on Earth.'

When faith is deeply rooted in the mind its reflection is bound to glow the external appearance and action. When we hold someone high in esteem our conduct shows it. Faith and conduct in their perfect form mingle together and become one and the same thing. When faith is perfect the conduct automatically complies with prescribed lines; and a perfect conduct on prescribed lines reflects the perfect faith. The Qur'an therefore gives due attention to the conduct and appearance alongwith the emphasis on inner purity and feeling of devotion.

'And that ye set your whole selves (to Him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your devotion sincere as in His sight.'
(Al-Qur'an VII-29)

When one attends the darbar (Hall of audience) of the Almighty for prayer and supplication and for direct communion with Him he must done a clean dress conforming to the requisites prescribed by the Shariah and must observe all rules of courtesy in such an august audience. It is true that He will notice the purity of heart first, yet the exterior should also reflect that inner purity. Of course, a polished exterior without inner purity is not desirable, but the neglect of external appearance which we see these days attributed to false notions is also not desirable. This verse of the Qur'an stipulates that a person should be presentable in his attire and appearance when attending a mosque. Ibn-e-Kathir in his commentary on this verse says :

"It is in keeping with the Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) that one should appear in his best clothes in Salat and it also enjoins upon the faithful bondman that he should cover during Salat those parts of the body which are ordained to be covered."

'God himself has condemned the person who desecrates mosque as a transgressor. The Qur'an says :—

"And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of God, God's name should be celebrated? Whose zeal is (in fact to ruin them? It was not fitting that such 'should themselves enter them except in fear. For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment." (Al-Qur'an II-114).

Although this revelation relates to a particular occasion (when the Makkahns stopped the Musalmans for performing Umrah in 06 A.H.), the principle is of universal application. It applies to all mosques. Whoever hinders the performance of prayer and other functions of the mosque shall stand condemned by God and face penalty. It is true that denial of God and joining others with the one and only one Allah is the greatest transgression entailing great penalty. But those who desecrate the mosque and stop people from performing Salat in the mosque are even worse transgressors than the others. This darbar, the place of His audience is the greatest symbol of Islam.

The importance of mosque has been highlighted in another way also; God Himself keeps a watch on their protection; when any people cross the limits in their evil ways and take to destroying the place of worship God Almighty destroys and annihilates them and saves the places of His worship.

"Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measures." (Al-Qur'an XXII-40)

This verse clearly tells us that God protected all places of worship which had been constructed according to the faith of the times, be they Churches of Christians or Synagogues of Jews or Mosques of the Muslims, and saved them from the onslaught of the enemies. The current times are the times of the Shariah of Islam proclaimed by the holy Prophet (peace be on him). The safety of the places of worship built according to this Shariah, the mosques, stands guaranteed, they have been protected and shall

continue always to be protected by God Himself, sometimes this protection may be perceptible and apparent and sometimes it may not be perceptible, but it is there.

Abraha's invasion of the holy Ka'ba at Makkah (a year before the birth of the Prophet of Islam) and the way he was destroyed is recorded history. Referring to this even the Qur'an says :

"And He sent against them flights of birds striking them with stores of battled clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw (of which the corn) has been eaten up."

(Al-Qur'an CV 2-5)

Thus God saved and protected the place of worship from the enemy.

IN THE TRADITION OF THE HOLY PROPHET

Abu Huairah narrates that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said the most loved places in the cities are the mosques and the most condemned are the bazars (market places). Once the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, for a Muslim who attends the mosque morning and evening God orders a feast heaven and he will be offered the hospitality in heaven morning and evening. Since mosques are the houses of God it is natural that the host extend hospitality and food to the guest. Those who attend the mosque for prayer are the guests of God and He will extend to them hospitality in heaven.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) gave happy tidings of perfect light to those who attend the mosque in dark hours.

Once the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said that God will take seven people under His umbrella on the Day of Judgment when no other umbrella will be available to any one. One of those seven persons would be he who remains absorbed in the thoughts of the mosque even on his way home from the mosque. In another Tradition it is narrated that one who enters the mosque comes under the protection of God. He will save him from harm and loss. The holy Prophet is reported to have said, "When you see a man devoted to the mosque and serving it, testify to his being a *Momin* (a truly faithful man)." The word used in this Tradition is "Ta'ahud" which means looking after, taking care, repair, cleaning performing Salat, offering prayer, reciting praises of God and giving lessons in religion. The man performing any or all of these functions will be entitled to be counted as serving the mosque.

Once the holy Prophet said that the persons who attend the mosque are immersed in sea of God's mercy. Another Tradition says that they are the crusaders in the path of God. In one Tradition the holy Prophet is quoted as saying, "Mosques are the houses of God and the Master of the houses has guaranteed His blessings, peace, and entry into heaven after smooth crossing of the path to those who frequent Him.

It is not that God needs a house of brick and mortar. God is free from all physical forms of existence. It is a similitude to convey the idea that God's grace hallows the precincts of the mosque. In another Tradition, mosques are called the trade centres for eternal life.

Once the holy Prophet said, 'When you pass through the gardens of heaven eat to your fill.' The companions asked "which are the gardens of heaven?" "The mosques", replied the Prophet. "How to eat one's fill?" asked the companions. The holy Prophet said keep (repeating *Subhanallah-i-Wal-Hamdu-Lillah-i-Wa Lal-Ilaha Illah-Wallaho Akbar*).

The mosque is a symbol of Islam. A Tradition says, "when you sight a mosque or hear the Azan, then stay your assault on the people. The mosque is the place for saying Salat and a centre for worship. That is why it is considered holy like the Ka'ba, the first house of God on earth. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said that whoever proceeds from his house to the mosque duly dressed and purified with ablution, he gets the same reward as a Haj pilgrim gets in a state of *Ehram* (The Haj pilgrim earns a reward all the time from the moment he changes from his usual clothes into unstitched pieces of cloth which are called *Ehram* until he changes again into his usual dress).

Abu Hurairah (may God pleased with him) narrates that the holy Prophet said, "Whoever comes to my mosque with pious mind and good intentions he is like a crusader in the path of God and whoever comes with some other intention he is like one who covets after another man's property."

Once the holy Prophet (peace be on him) also said, "With whatever intention a man comes to the mosque that is his lot."

Not only the mosque itself but its surroundings and neighbourhood is also hallowed and blessed. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Those who live in the neighbourhood of a mosque have precedence over those living at a distance like the crusaders in the path of God have precedence over those staying back at home."

It is interesting to see that God showers blessings on those persons also

whose residence happens to be at a distance from the mosque. They need not feel dejected by the prospect of their losing precedence as against those living in the neighbourhood of the mosque. They too have plentiful rewards in their own place. Says a Tradition, "Much reward is for those who traverse long distance to reach the mosque and perform Salat with the congregation. They are much better than those who perform Salat alone and go to sleep." Every step that a man takes towards the mosque for congregational prayer is counted for rewards.

Jabir bin Abdullah narrates that his house was at some distance from the mosque. He says, "once I made up my mind to sell off the house and take up residence in the neighbourhood of the holy Prophet's mosque. The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) stopped me from this and said, "Verily there are rewards for you for every step that you take from your house to the mosque."

Jabir also narrates that some place fell vacant in the neighbourhood of the holy Prophet's mosque. The tribe of Banu Salma which lived at some distance from the mosque wished to shift their residence in the neighbourhood of the mosque and leave their old place. When Banu Salma mentioned it to the Prophet (peace be on him) he said, "O Banu Salma, keep your houses, there is reward for you for every step that you take from your house to the mosque."

Both these Traditions show that the holy Prophet encouraged them to stay on where they were and not be disheartened by the distance from the mosque. Even this distance earned for them greater rewards, for every steps was counted for rewards. Moreover, when a man proceeds from his house to the mosque after performing ablution, it is as if he is in a state of prayer and so his rewards are all the more.

Ubi bin Ka'ab narrates the story of an Ansari who lived very far from the mosque. Yet he attended the mosque regularly and never missed the congregational prayer. Someone said to him how nice it would be if he had purchased a donkey so that it would be convenient to him to attend the mosque at night and in the hot sun. He said "I would rather not be next door to the mosque and save myself from the trouble of walking the distance; I wish that the steps that I take in walking to and from the mosque are noted in my record to deeds." When the holy Prophet heard of it he said, "God has given you reward for the steps taken both ways."

Once the holy Prophet said when any body proceeds to the mosque purified with ablution to perform the Salat his one step wipes out his sin and the next elevates him in piety and bliss.

Whenever the holy Prophet returned from a journey he first went to the mosque and offered two Rak'at of Salat. After meeting the people there he went to his house. After the Prophet the companions (may God be pleased with them) also followed the same practice. It is a good practice for the Muslims to follow it even now-a-day.

Etikaf is a Tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) and it has great benefits. This can be performed only in a mosque. So a mosque is needed for observing this Tradition.

CHAPTER TEN

CONSTRUCTION OF A MOSQUE

MOSQUE AND ITS CONSTRUCTION

Construction of mosques as nerve centres of collective life had taken shape as a systematic network in the life time of the holy Prophet. The holy Prophet had ordered construction of mosques in all the places where there was no mosque and Muslims had taken up residence there. Aisha (may God be pleased with her) narrates that 'The holy Prophet (peace be on him) ordered that mosques be constructed in all mohallas (localities). The companions of the Prophet constructed mosque in every Muslim locality. As mentioned earlier the Masjid-e-Quba and Masjid-e-Nabawi were built by the holy Prophet with his own hands. Thereafter many mosques were built in Madinah to cover all the localities. In the wake of Muslim conquest of vast territories in many lands mosques were built at every place conquered by the Muslims. The *Fatuhul Baldan*, a history of Muslim conquest, mentions the existence of mosques in every town and territory conquered by Muslims. 'Ata narrates that during the tenure of Caliphate of Omar when cities were conquered Caliph ordered that Muslims should build mosques at every place they conquered. This order was carried out with the religious fervor that marked that glorious period of history. Historians have estimated the number of mosque throughout the Muslim territory at that time to 6000 out of which 2000 were Jama Masjids. The number may have been even more.

NEED FOR BUILDING A MOSQUE

It is true that Salat can be offered at any place which is clean. The whole earth is a place fit for prayers. Said the Prophet, "The whole earth is fit for prostration (serving as a mosque) and clean. Members of

my Ummah should say Salat wherever they be at the time of a particular Salat.”

This leaves no excuse for the bondman to neglect His remembrances of God or to forego prayers at the fixed times. When time for prayer comes one can not say that there was no mosque and so he did not perform Salat. It is necessary for him to perform Salat at the fixed time. Where there is a mosque near about he must attend the congregational prayer there but if there is no mosque nearby the whole earth is clean and fit for performing Salat.

However, in order that the Muslims are brought together under a discipline which may bind them together and turn a crowd into a disciplined force, the rules of Shariah provide for the establishment of the order of the mosques and made it incumbent on all Muslims to attend those mosques five times a day. It made the status of the mosques as a sanctified public place so that no one may feel shy in coming there and in saying Salat and ordained that no one may stop any one else from attending the mosque.

It is true, as the scholars have described, the main purpose of the mosque is performance of Salat. But it does not mean that other religious functions are not permissible in the mosque. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) himself utilized the mosque for different purposes connected with religion. We may therefore say that mosques are also the centres in matters concerning the Ummah, its welfare and exigencies of the time.

RIGHT OF CONSTRUCTION ONLY TO MUSLIMS

Since the benefits of this house of God accrue exclusively to the Muslims the right to build the mosque has been naturally given only to the Muslims who have faith in God. Those who deny God or take partners with God have no right to build mosques and even if they do, it will not be an acceptable offering to God. To build a mosque is the exclusive right of those who have faith and follow the instructions of God without fear of any one, perform Salat observe fast and have faith in the day of Judgment. Every Muslim who declares his faith has a right to build the mosque but those who are pious and God-fearing have preference over others. As to the construction of mosques by the nonbelievers and those who take partners to God, the scholars say that they may be allowed to build a mosque if they do it as a pious act according to their own faith, otherwise not. But if the Muslims consider it for some reasons against the interests of Islam, permission to construct a mosque will not be given to non-believers and to those who take partners to God. Abu Bakar Hanafi writes : The Qur'an

clearly says that non-believers shall not be allowed to build mosques nor shall they be entrusted with its management.

REWARDS FOR BUILDING A MOSQUE

A man who builds a mosque has a high place in the eyes of Islam and great is the reward which Allah gives to him.

“Whoever builds a mosque for God (for His pleasure and for no worldly considerations) God will make a similar house for him in heaven.”

In some texts of the Traditions it is promised that the house in heaven will be bigger and in some other texts better than the mosque built by him on earth. However the words similar or bigger or better, should not be taken to mean that such houses in heaven will in any way be comparable to the one on this earth. The promised house in heaven will be different from the mosque built by men on earth as a creation of God is bound to be infinitely better from any thing built by man.

Of course God rewards the bondman for his pious deeds appropriately. It is of course indulging in idle dreams to guess how many rooms, and how big, will there be in the heavenly house or things of that sort. In short, the reward will be corresponding to the deed and in the addition there will be other gifts by grace.

It is not for building a mosque completely that one would earn a reward for the builder. Even a small portion or a small contribution towards construction of the mosque entitles man to suitable reward. The part contribution may be in any form - money, material, labour etc. For physical labour indeed the holy prophet set his own example for others to follow. The holy Prophet and his companions built mosques with their own hands. They built the mosque of Quba and the Prophet's mosque at Madinah. The Qur'an has described how Ibrahim and Ismail (may God bless them) built the Ka'ba.

During the constructions of the Prophet's mosque Ammar Bin Yathir used to carry bricks and he performed his task with great dedication. When the holy Prophet (peace be on him) saw him working like this, he brushed his hair with affection.

The roof of the Prophet's mosque was made to date leaves. One night it rained and water seeped from the roof. The whole floor became muddy. The companions collected pebbles in their cloaks and spread them on the floor. The holy Prophet was much pleased and praised them for their work.

The man who donates land for the mosque will also be entitled to the promised rewards as also the man who donates a constructed house. But the man who works on construction for remuneration will not be entitled to the promised reward since there is no devotion involved. However if he works on concessional rates, or devotion is the guiding factor for doing the work in the construction of the mosque (in preference to other jobs available to him) in that case he may of course hope to be rewarded by God's grace. Besides the land and building donation of other things required for the mosque will also earn him a reward from God Almighty in His bountiful grace e.g. prayer mats or carpets, lights, building a shed or a tank for ablutions or digging a well for water or fixing water pump or things which may provide comfort and convenience for those who attend the mosque. (The well or water pump should be located out of the built up or open area strictly reserved for saying Salat). These will earn for the donor a reward of actual prayer so long as men are using them. Thus building of a mosque or things supplied and provided for the convenience of people attending the mosque will earn a continuing reward to the donor so long as these things remain serviceable to the people.

Some Points to be kept in View in the Construction of a Mosque

Shah Abdul Aziz has indicated that all these rewards are bestowed for a mosque or things provided therein where these are needed. It is an important point to remember. When some one thinks of constructing a mosque he should see whether a mosque is really needed at the place or not. Whether the need is genuine or it is just an indulgence for personal gratification. Some people do not take care of this point and build a mosque just with an eye on the reward for building a mosque. This is not a correct approach. If reward is the desired object then there are many ways to earn the reward. Better than constructing a mosque at a place where it is not needed, is to perform many other services to the cause of Islam which are normally neglected by others.

Supposing some one built a mosque where there already existed a mosque adequate enough to accommodate the congregation of the surrounding locality. This construction will indeed be a source of evil instead of good; it will not be an act of righteousness and piety. The congregation which was being held smoothly in one mosque will be split up and the solidarity of the locality will be disintegrated. During the Caliphate of Omar (may God be pleased with him) when the territorial expansion took place he ordered construction of mosques in every locality

but at the same time he ordered that there should not be at any place two mosques which might be harmful to each other.

To construct several mosques in one locality is not free from harm except when the population of one locality is so spread over, that people from one corner may not reach the other corner. It is therefore appropriate that there should not be more than one mosque in a locality; they should not be near each other least it causes dissension in the congregation.

Another mosque may not be constructed in the neighbourhood of one mosque unless there is a valid reason for it, e.g. the first mosque falls short of the congregational requirement and there is no scope for expanding it or there is apprehension of dispute if the congregational prayers are held in one mosque. Without any such valid reason building of the mosques near each other amounts to causing dissension among in the Muslim of locality and it is against the interest of the organisation and discipline of the *Ummah*. It will cause dissension in the community, impair spirit of devotion and the glory of the mosque will vanish.

Cautious Approach

The pious men of Yamure did not like to attend prayers in such mosques which had even a semblance of the Masjid-e-Dharar. They preferred the older mosque over the mosque built later. Many *Ulama* have emphasised his point quite often. Such mosques as are built for name and fame and smack of hypocrisy would come under the category of Masjid-e-Dharar and building of such mosques must be avoided.

INTENTION MUST BE PURIFIED BEFORE CONSTRUCTION IS TAKEN UP

What is the dictate of the *Shariah* in case of a mosque if built by someone, say some important person, for the sake of name and fame and hypocrisy and not with pure intentions ? Before replying this question let us understand the significance of purity of intention and purity of action. There is a Tradition narrated by the Second Caliph Omar (may God be pleased with him). The learned scholars of *Hadith* consider it a cardinal Tradition. In fact Imam Bukhari has noted this one as the first Tradition of his compilation "Jume-al-Sahih" or the "Compilation of authentic Traditions" and has discussed the purity of intentions in the beginning of compilation. The Tradition reads as follow :

The Prophet said, "Actions are ascribed to intentions and a man gets the credit for that which he intends. Thus, one who migrated for God and His Apostle will be deemed to have done so for God and the Prophet and one who migrated for worldly object or to marry any woman will be deemed to have done so for that object or women."

Every sentence of this Tradition deserves to be read over and over again with careful attention. The Tradition makes it clear that the effect of one's deeds depends entirely on the intention of the doer. The deed is rewarded (by God) only when the intention behind the deed is pure and pious. Even a great deed like migration is deprived of reward if the intention is not pure. On the other hand, a blind man who is unable to take part in a crusade due to his physical handicap earns a reward from God if his intention is there to join the forces of Islam. Who can have any doubts about Salat being a pious deed. But if one performs Salat for the sake of appearances and deception, it will earn him his doom instead of reward. The holy Qur'an says :—

'So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who (want but) to be seen (of men)."

(Al-Qur'an CVII 4-6)

Maaun is a horrible pit of hell deep down. Some have translated it as doom, destruction. In any case it is clear that Salat performed ostentatiously is condemned. According to one Tradition the holy Prophet (peace be on him) called it a form of *Shirk*, i.e. it tantamounts to taking partners with God. Indeed God knows our inner most thoughts, our intentions and feelings are as clearly noticed by Him as the external appearance and deeds. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "God does not see your faces; He surely sees what is in your heart." So intention is a great factor in making a deed worthy of reward. In an important work, such as construction of a mosque, the intention of the builder is materially important. Impure intentions would certainly reflect themselves in the deeds. If the building of the mosque is with the intention of hypocrisy and for the sake of name and fame, he will get in reward these very things as his reward but not the heavenly bliss promised to those of pure intentions.

"The mosque which is built pretensively for the sake of name and exhibition or with some other design and is not built purely for the pleasure of God or if the mosque is built with ill-gotten money and material, it is like the Masjid-e-Dharar."

MASJID-I-DHARAR

Masjid-e-Dharar or the mosque of mischief was a mosque which was built opposite the Masjid-e-Quba by hypocrites and enemies of Islam. The purpose was to cause dissension among Muslims and hatch a conspiracy against them. The hypocrites had made a stronghold for themselves under the facade of mosque. When God enlightened the holy Prophet about it he had it burn down to ashes. The Qur'an says :—

“And there are those who put up a mosque by way of mischief and infidelity — to disunite the Believers — And in preparation for one who warred against God and His Apostle aforetime. They will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good; but God doth declare that they are certainly liars. Never stand thou forth therein.”
(Al-Qur'an IX-107.)

If a mosque built by a true Muslim but it resembles Masjid-e-Dharar in any way — if it is built with evil intentions or for earning name and fame in this world and not for the reward from God one can imagine the fate of such a mosque and the fate of the builder May God save Muslims from the penalty of such a sin. Let it be noted, however, that every mosque built for display and with impure intention cannot be likened to Masjid-e-Dharar. Of course, such persons will be deprived of heavenly reward and God's blessings. But otherwise the mosque which a Muslim builds for name and fame is not necessarily the like of Masjid-e-Dharar, for in the case of that mosque it was intended to serve as a facade for conspiracy and mischief, whereas the mosque which a Muslim builds for the sake of name and social position is a mosque all the same, to serve as a place for Salat and not as a facade for mischief and conspiracy. It is deprived of the reward in heaven and blessings on earth though, but it need not be pulled down or deserted.

There were four features which characterised the Masjid-e-Dharar. First, that the hypocrites had made it a place for their mischievous activities to harm the Muslim and to serve their nefarious designs. Secondly, that it was intended to strengthen the opposition of Islam. Thirdly, that it aimed at causing dissension among the Muslims and disintegration among them. And fourthly, that the hypocrites had built it for hiding themselves. The commentators have named an Abu Amir Khazui, a Christian, as the man to whom the verse (of the Qur'an) cited above refers. The Muslim who builds a mosque for the sake of name and fame and social position does not have any of these four vicious intentions. Therefore, the mosque built

by such a Muslim remains a mosque although the builder may not be rewarded like one who builds a mosque with pure intentions, for the sake of pleasure of God. No doubt every Muslim should abstain from things which deprive him of God's blessings and rewards and he should fear God and forfeiture of fruits of his deeds.

NAME PLATE OF THE BUILDER

Some people display their names on mosque. This is an innovation. It is clearly hypocrisy and shows lack of pure intentions. In the present day society people are victims of glamour, selfishness and self-praise. Mulla Jeewan said, one wonders at those so called elites who go about building mosques only for pomp and show and for gaining distinction in society. They blindly follow their ancestors without grasping the rationale behind the well-intended actions of the forefathers. They should ponder over the episode of Masjid-e-Dharar and fear similar consequence falling to their lot.

Besides the purity of intention, care should be taken that the money and material used in the mosque has been honestly earned, the loop-holes which might vitiate the sanctity of the mosque are plugged and it is fully secured against all harm (attendant to impurity of intention or of money or material used in the building of the mosque).

Impure and ill-gotten money has a peculiar effect of its own, it is like poison, a source of trouble and mischief sooner or later. Even if it does no instant harm one must not be complacent, specially when such ill-gotten money is used for construction of a mosque which is dedicated to God. One must be very careful. Without doubt God is pure and he does not accept any offering except that which is pure. Use of ill-gotten money is not permissible for any purpose, much less for the construction of a mosque.

If some one uses the ill-gotten money in the mosque he really transgresses against the faith. The Ulama have said that a mosque built by a dancing girl or prostitute would not be treated as a mosque at all. Maulana Abdul Hai of Farangi Mahal has cited the Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) referred earlier in support of his views. In another Farwa he has referred to cited a Tradition narrated in Muslim and Tirmizi that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said that the earnings from flesh trade are *Khabith*. He has translated the word *Khabith* as *haram*, i.e., Prohibited, unlawful and illegal. To clarify and support his translation of the word

(*Khabith*) by the word *haram* he has quoted Syed Jamaluddin, Shaikh Abdul Haque and Mulla Ali Qari.

Mulla Ali Qari says, The earnings of a prostitute are undisputedly unlawful and prohibited because she earns it as a price for her sexual performance which is prohibited. The means employed for such earning are also prohibited even if it is called Mehr because it is paid for the use of the women's sexual organ.

In short a mosque cannot be built with money which is unlawfully gained and is ill-gotten, whether it is earned through singing and flesh trade or some other evil means. Supposing there is a mosque built with such ill-gotten money and some one offers prayer in that mosque, the prayer will be treated as duly performed, but one may not look forward to God's blessing and reward as he could have got by performing the prayer in another, pure and blessed mosque. The builder of the mosque will also not get any reward.

Use of money which may be not exactly harm (impure) but which is of doubtful character should also be avoided in the construction of mosque so that the mosque is free of any blot and the congregational centre of the Muslims remains truly an ideal place. The Ulama have therefore opined that it is not right to use the earning of a scavenger who has no other source of income than from carrying the night soil because such an earning has been described in the Traditions as doubtful. Similarly Zakat or money which comes under the description of Charity is not permissible for the building of a mosque because such money is a sort of scum.

The construction of a mosque is a truly pious deed which will be rewarded by God but it is absolutely necessary in the construction of a mosque to keep in view the matters which have been discussed in the foregoing pages.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DECORATION OF MOSQUES

It has become a common practice these days to make the mosque a beautiful structure with colourful paints and ornamental flowers and also to decorate the interior with inscriptions chandeliers and calligraphy pieces. Let us see what are the instruction of the shariah in this behalf. Even otherwise, the matter needs attention in the light of economic condition of Muslims, lest people come to consider the decoration and ornamentation as an essential part of a mosque. When funds do not permit such extravagances the expanding process and construction of mosque may itself come to a halt or account of the false notion that such expenses are essential.

The Masjid-e-Nabawi was built by the holy Prophet (peace be on him) himself and that should be our best model. It was simple and modest in structure. Let us have a look at it Imam Bukhari has noted a Tradition for Abdullah-ibn-Omar (may God be pleased with him) which purports to say.

"In the days of holy Prophet (peace be on him) the Masjid-e-Nabawi was built with bricks of mud; trunks of date trees were used for pillars and the roof was covered with date leaves. Abu Bakar (may God be pleased with him) did not effect any expansion in it and let it remain as it was. Omar (may God be pleased with him) did renovate it but he rebuilt it on original foundations and used mud bricks for wall and date leave for covering the roof as before. Only the pillars were made of wood. Hadhrat Uthman (may God be pleased with him) effected considerable expansion and renovation. The walls were built or carved stones and also the pillars and the roof was laid with the Indian teak." Thus we see that structurally the mosque remained on its original foundations till the period of Umar's

caliphate although the period of Omar's Caliphate was distinguished for economic prosperity. A series of conquests had brought camel loads of wealth from distant lands of Roman and Persian empires. He took up development work in many fields and established new departments. But he did not decorate the mosque nor made it ornamental, rather he firmly opposed it. His orders were that ornamentation is the root of trouble and mischief and it should not be done.

Omar issued orders for construction of mosque but at the same time he said that he wanted to protect the people from rain. He warned the people that they should not make the mosque red and yellow which may become source of mischief.

During the caliphate of Uthman (may God be pleased with him), however, some ornamentation crept in. As a matter of fact sophistication now gripped the society and people had started constructing big residential buildings. Uthman (may God be pleased with him) thought it necessary that the structure of the mosque should also be improved. The mosques constructed by him did not have much ornamental carvings, nor were the walls painted in colours, only the mosques were made moderately decent. Many companions of the holy Prophet did not like it. They wanted things to remain as they were in the day of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) to whose memory they were deeply devoted. However they did not protest.

The person who crossed the limits of moderation and started decorating the mosques was Walid bin Abdul Malik bin Marwan, a Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. Most of the companions of the holy Prophet had died by that time, only a few were still alive. Omar bin Abdul Aziz was the governor of Madinah when the renovation of the Masjid-e-Nabawi was undertaken in 88 AH under his supervision. Masons and architects were called from Byzantine. Some construction material was also received from there. Because the architects and masons were Roman or Qibis they did commit desecration of the mosque on some occasions, and the chandeliers and decorations were extravagantly used. On the front wall alone the expenditure incurred was 47000 Gold Coins.

It took three to four years to complete the work. After the completion of work Walid (the Caliph) came to inspect it. He happened to meet the son of Uthman (may God be pleased with him). Walid said to him, 'See, What a difference between the mosque built by your father and this one.' The son of Uthman replied, 'Yet What my father had built was a mosque and this building of your is like the churches and synagogues of Christians and Jews.'

DECORATION IN THE EYES OF SHARIAH

In the light of the Traditions it is clear that such ornamental buildings are not desirable in the eye of Shariah.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said 'It is not ordained to make the mosques ornamental.' Abdullah bin Abbas has preferred to such extravagant decoration of mosques as making them comparable to churches and observed that such a treatment of a place of worship is not desirable because it betrays vulgar exhibition of pride rather than devotion.

It is true that these extravagant ornamentation of the mosques have been copied from Jews and Christians. But Muslims surpassed other communities and left them far behind. The mosques existing in lands far and near are unparelled in their grandeur. Akhbar-ul-Andalus gives the details of many such mosques.

The Shariah prohibits such ornamental decoration perhaps because it expels sincere devotion and fear of God from the hearts and fills them with pride and exhibition. A Tradition of the holy Prophet says that these are the warning signals of the approaching end of this world.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "The day of Judgement will come when men start behaving arrogantly in mosques." Experience shows that doom overtakes people who run after appearances and forget the essence.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When any people degenerates they decorate their places of worship." This is warning that decoration of mosques is a sign of the millat's degeneration.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "I see that in the near future you will start building your mosques as the Jews and Christians build their Synagogues and Churches."

Look at the height of the mosques and their ornamentation and decoration and, in contrast, the poor attendance at prayers. How hollow is the feeling that went into the construction of the high rise building and their ornamentation and what a total lack of attention to the real purpose of the mosque. May God help us all.

Anas, a companion of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) hinted at conditions prevailing today when he said, "There will come a time when people will ask pride in building mosques but very few people will care to attend them."

Ornamentation is contrary to as we have noted before quality of God

fearing. That the essence of Salat is fear of God and devotion without these *salah* is lifeless ritual.

Fear of God is generally lacking among people these days. Decoration in the mosques would all the more distract their mind and tempt them into luxury. Once the holy Prophet (peace be on him) saw a beautiful curtain on the door of Aisha (may God be pleased with her). He said, "Remove this fine curtain. The pictures (painted on it) will distract my attention in the prayer. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) did not like even a decorated curtain.

This Tradition tells us to keep away from those things which distract mind from devotion to and fear of God. Commenting on it Imam Nawair says, "Decorating the Mehrab and painting or carving the walls of the mosques are things that distract attention of men coming for salat. Therefore they are it is objectionable.

How strange that the holy Prophet (peace be on him), whom we claim to follow, avoided even the things which caused the lightest diversion distraction, but we do not guard ourselves even against bigger distractions.

Permission of the Needful

Some Ulama have permitted building of beautiful mosques and decorating them in view of prevailing circumstances. Ibn-ul-Muneeb says that when that people build grand and beautiful buildings for their residence then, in order to save the mosques from an inferior position and disrespect they should also be decorated.

He says that (stopping from) ornamentation and decoration of mosques is Justified on the ground that the pious men of yore did not indulge in it and did not approve of it, but there is no other ground against ornamentation. Imam Abu Hanifa (may God be pleased with him) has also allowed it on condition that it is done with the intention of enhancing the respects and dignity of the mosque and that the money spend on it is a personal property of the donor and not taken out of funds of the Waqf or Baitul Maal.

Limited Permission by Jurists

But many other Ulama are against any decoration and their arguments are strong and they are nearer to the view point of the Traditions cited in the foregoing pages. Even Imam Abu Hanifa who has permitted decoration says that it is merely permissible but not commendable. The total affect

of his detailed exposition is that personally he felt that buildings of the mosque should be simple and the money that would be required for ornamentation and decoration should better be spent on the poor and the needy. The Hanafi Jurists also clarify that the Mehrab, the wall towards the Qibla and walls on the right and left should be kept plain and simple. There should not be any paintings and carvings on them because this is undoubtedly undesirable. The reasons are clear. The decoration of the Mehrab would distract the attention of the Imam and the decoration of the front wall would distract the first row of the congregation and similarly decoration of the walls on the right and left would distract people standing near them at the far end. It leaves the back wall which may be decorated, even though this too is not commendable. All these details relate to the inside of the walls. As regards the outer side of the mosque the Hanafi Jurists do not permit its ornamentation at all since the congregation of the mosque has no interest in it. It should be borne in mind that if any manager (mutawalli) of the Waqf spends waqf funds on ornamentation and decoration of the mosque, even in the inside portion, he will have to pay the penalty; for it has already been clarified in the beginning that Imam Abu Hanifa permits decoration (under the above mentioned limitations) with one's personal funds and not with funds of the Waqf or Baitul Maal public exchequer.

The above details are taken from the famous book on Hanafi jurisprudence. '*Durrul Mukhtar*.' The other famous compilation the '*Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*' declares all decoration, paintings and carvings on the walls of mosques as undesirable and amplifies that the paintings and carvings, be they much or little, are undesirable. Only the roof may be slightly decorated with painting and inscriptions. Heavy decoration, painting and carving should be avoided which is wasteful and is disapproved by the Qur'an.

Better still it is that the walls of the mosque should be strong and plain and there should not be any painting not even by calligraphy. The author of the *Bahrul-Raiq* says :—

"It is better that the walls of the mosque are white-washed and free from paintings and engravings and should be no calligraphy on them."

Shah Abdul Aziz (may God be Pleased with him) says, care and caution should be taken in construction a mosque. It will not be painted with gold nor the walls decorated. The roof should not be polished with gold nor decorated with paintings and carvings and they should not be painted in blue or any other shining colour because such things turn a mosque into

a place of ornamentation. That is why the second caliph Omar has emphasised at the time of renovation of the Masjid-e-Nabawi that the mosque should be such that it protects the people from rain and such other things. He but warned against painting it with Red or Yellow colours lest people fall prey to mischief.

The present trends in Decoration

Now-a-days when Muslims are economically hard hit the poverty stares them in the eye, there are so many poor and needy persons around who are widows and orphans who are neglected, it is difficult to arrange for the educational facilities of the poor children and religious and educational institutions are facing financial crisis, it is not wise to spend money on decoration and ornamentation of mosques.

It is true that in the days gone by Muslims but spent lavishly on consques. But that is not a valid argument as against the dictates of shariat law. Moreover Muslims had enough money to spare in those days.

It has been experienced that as the ornamentation and decoration of mosques is getting popular the attendance of the people for prayer is correspondingly decreasing. Even the few people who do attend the mosque do not seem to hear that devotion and fear of God which was the characteristic of the early Muslims who did not decorate their mosques.

We may consider certain other features of the mosques.

The Minarettes

Shaikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi says that a minarette for the muazzin was introduced by Walid-bin-Abdul Malik at the time of renovation of the Masjid-e-Nabawi. Before that there was no minareues. Allama Ibn-A bid in his book *Bahr-al-Raiq* corroborates that there were no minerattes in the days of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). He says, "There was no special place for the *muazzin* from where to give the call for prayers in the days of the holy Prophet."

Although the *minar*, from where the muazzin gives a call for prayers was not built in the days of the holy Prophet, yet it is desirable to have it. 'Urwah-bin-Zubair has narrated that a lady of the Bani Najjar told him, "My house was the tallest (highest) among the houses in the neighbourhood of the Masjid-e-Nabawi Bilal gave the call for prayer from there. He came very early (in the small hours of the night) and sat there waiting the looking for the pre-down signs and as soon as he saw the signs he got up for calling

the *azan*. It is stated in the *Durrul Mukhtar*, that the lady mentioned by Urwah was the mother of Zaid-bin-Thabit. When the roof of the mosque was completed the call was given from there. The place for the muazzin was slightly raised.

The need for the minarette was felt even earlier but it was introduced as stated by Shami, during the period of caliph Muaviya.

The pulpit where the Imam stands and delivers the lecture was introduced in the day of holy Prophet (peace be on him). In the beginning the holy Prophet used to deliver his sermon leaning on a staff which was kept adjoining the *mehrab* nearer the western wall. In the year 8 AH a lady requested that if it please the holy Prophet she may get a pulpit made by her slave and present it. The holy Prophet gave his approval and then also reminded her. The lady presented the pulpit and it was installed there. At that time a strange thing happened. The wooden staff on which the holy Prophet leaned while delivering the sermon cried loudly with tears as it was so intensely grieved. The holy Prophet embraced it and consoled it, then it calmed down. The pulpit had three steps. Each step was about nine inches in width. The whole pulpit was two Zara long and one Zara wide i.e. about 3 feet long and 1½ feet wide. the holy Prophet also used his staff and bow for leaning upon while delivering the sermon. But it is not reported that he used his sword or spear for the purpose. But if someone uses them for the purpose there seems to be nothing objectionable in it.

The parapets which are generally built on the top of the mosque these days were not made in the days of the holy Prophet or even during the tenure of the first four caliph. These came much later, in the days of Walid-bin-Abdul Malik. "The first man to introduce the *mehrab* and the parapet was Omar-bin-Abdul Aziz. He was the governor of Madinah and the Masjid-e-Nabawi was renovated and decorated in his days."

Some Ulama are of opinion that the *mehrab* was there in the days of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). Ibn-e-Humam is one of those who hold this view. But the Traditions do not support it. Some others hold the contrary view and they too rely upon the Traditions in their support.

Some Ulama have supported the view that a mosque may be built in a (residential) house. There are many Traditions in this regard. Technically such mosques are called "Masjid-al-Bait." In fact this is a place within the house which is earmarked for performing nawafil salat. These are the places referred to as masjid in the Traditions of the Makki period. There are hints in the Traditions regarding performing nawafil of voluntary prayers at home.

The Tradition which says 'do not make your house into a grave' also says the same thing, that Fardh (obligatory prayers) should not be performed at home.

Aisha (may God be pleased with her) says, "The holy Prophet ordered making mosques in the house and for keeping it clean and fragrant."

Suffian (may God be pleased with him) says, "establish a mosque in the mohallas i.e. in the tribes.

Rules for the Masjid-e-Bait vary from the rules for the regular mosque. The sanctity of the Masjid-e-Bait is not the same as that of a regular mosque.

LOCATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOSQUES

We give below the gist of instructions regarding the location and construction of a mosque in the light of the injunctions in the Qur'an and guidance in the Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him).

Two mosques of the period of the holy Prophet have the distinction of having been built by the holy Prophet himself. In respect of both these mosques the Qur'an says, "The foundation (of these) is on piety and fear of God." The plot of land for the Masjid-e-Nabawi was obtained on the payment of the price. We have explained at some length in the previous chapter that only a clean and pure gift i.e. gift made out of lawful earnings can be accepted, be it in the form of land or money or material. So a mosque should be built on a land which is obtained by honest means and it should not suffer from any defect in title.

The jurists have said that if someone builds mosque on a land on which some one else has a title and his consent has not been obtained then that person has the right to say that the construction of the mosque is void and resume his title on the land. For example, there is a land on which someone has the right to preference because of relationship or neighbourhood. Mosque can not be constructed on such a land.

Or, for example, someone is ill and before his death he makes a will donating his land or house for a mosque. But he did not give (or leave) due share of his property to his legal heirs, his will shall not be executed even for the mosque. At best it will be valid for one third of the property and the legal heirs will be entitled to take their due shares. If the deceased had made the will in respect only of one third of his property there would not have been any difficulty and that portion of the property would have been utilized for the mosque.

Similarly the purchase of land for the mosque should be by honest means. Land purchased by fraud or other dishonest means can not be used for building a mosque.

"Allah is clean and does not accept anything but clean."

Construction of a mosque on land obtained by dishonest or unfair means is not permissible. For example, if some people forcibly turn somebody's house into a mosque or Juma Masjid, the prayers, whether daily prayers or Juma prayers offered therein will not be valid.

It is therefore necessary for the donor to demarcate and separate the mosque alongwith the access to it and declare general permission for the people at large to perform prayers and declare that he has donated that particular land/house in the name of God, calling azan and performance of congregational prayers may commence these, and the donor should waive all rights in it. After having taken these steps he is not permitted to have any personal benefit or advantage from the donated property. The donor is not permitted to make use of any portion of the mosque for his personal purpose. No one can build a house below it or above it. The whole plot on which the mosque is built ceases to be the personal property of the donor not only on that ground but also under the ground as far below as ground.

Even if, for any reason of natural calamity or otherwise, the mosque is abandoned, or there are not people left to attend the mosque or the building of the mosque is destroyed, the abandoned building and the land will remain subject to the rules applicable to mosque—nobody can sell it, or take it as inheritance, nor can the donor reclaim it. Nobody can use it for personal gain or for any purpose other than the purpose of a mosque. The donor is not permitted even to take advantage of wall of the mosque for his own use.

The jurists have clarified that if someone builds a two storeyed building and declares one floor as mosque and keeps the other floors in his possession, in that case it will not be treated as mosque. It will be treated as mosque only when he converts all the floors into masjid.

If someone has given his land forever for performing salat in congregation and has not laid any conditions or time limit then this land will be masjid for all time to come; the heirs will not be entitled to any share in it. However, if there is a time limit given by the owner, his heirs will get it back after the donor's death. This will apply if the donor had given the land while he was in good health or before his last illness.

It is permissible if there is a thoroughfare so wide that there would

be no difficulty (to the passersby) if a mosque is built on it and the residents of the locality build a mosque there opposition by one or two persons would not matter. But if the passers by are inconvenienced in traversing the road then it is not right to build a mosque on the road.

A public well which is under the control and use of any particular group may be filled up with earth and mosque may be constructed on it by the members of that group provided nobody has an objection to it. Similarly part of a wide road way may be annexed to a mosque if it does not cause inconvenience to the users of the road.

But a portion of the mosque can not be annexed for the road under any circumstances.

A mosque can be built at any site which is properly obtained in places where Muslims live and in the bazar, road side or wherever else it is warranted (for the faithful to perform Salat.)

A mosque shall not be built at a place where it does not serve its purpose, for example in the midst of large tracts of land where people do not live and cannot reach for attending the mosque for prayers. Even if some one makes such a building it would not be treated as a mosque.

When a mosque falls short of requirements it may be expanded. If there is adjoining land belonging to the mosque then there is no problem. If it belongs to someone else then it should be purchased on payment of price. Otherwise, as a last resort, it is also permissible to acquire such land on payment of reasonable price. All possible efforts should however be made to have it by consent of owner.

A neighbour of the mosque offers his houses, which is bigger in lieu of the existing mosque which he may turn into a residential house. Imam Mohammad says that this is not permissible and the residents of the place have no authority, to enter into such an arrangement.

In another case say, there is a shop or open plot adjoining the mosque it is also a Waqf in favour of the mosque. It can be used for expansion of the mosque. The open courtyard of the mosque may be included in the covered portion of the main building. It is also permissible to open a new door and close the previous one.

The man who built the mosque does not have the right to build a shop in the mosque or in the appertenant land of the mosque; for appertenant land has the same sanctity as the mosque. Nothing should be done which amounts to desecrating the mosque or violating its sanctity.

After the mosque is built and completed it is not permissible to make a shop below it or on top of it, for whatever purpose it may be. Any construction needed for the performance of Salat is permissible.

It is permissible to make alterations in the mosque if it is only for the purpose of the mosque and the convenience of those who attend the mosque of prayers, for example, to demolish the old building and build a fresh one. But it is necessary for this to take permission of the Qazi.

Residents of the locality may provide articles for the use of the people who attend the mosque for prayers, e.g. prayer mats or carpets, and to make arrangement for light and water, all this from their own funds. But if the person who built the mosque himself attends all these things then another person has no right to do it or make any gifts (without the permission of original builder or the Mutawalli or Manager of the Waqf).

NATURAL CALAMITY

The jurists have clarified what to do with a mosque which is no more needed due to some calamity or other circumstances.

For example, due to some upheaval or natural calamity or changing times it comes to pass that Muslim population is extinct at a certain place or they die in an epidemic or are forced by the circumstances to migrate and nobody is left to attend the mosque for prayers, it has fallen into a state of disrepair, is almost in ruins, and there is nobody who could repair it or perform prayers there. In spite of all this the mosque shall remain a mosque. It cannot be used for any other purpose. It cannot be sold, not auctioned, not even for building another mosque from its sale proceeds, no its movable property or various other articles can be transferred elsewhere. However, if these articles are deteriorating and perishing or there is grave apprehension of these being destroyed or usurped by some aggressor, then it is permissible to transfer such perishable articles to another mosque. The land on which the mosque is constructed and the structure and the space about it shall however, remain a mosque to the end of time.

Similarly, the carpets and matings when rendered surplus for the mosque shall be returned to the donor, if alive, otherwise to his heirs. Some scholars are of the opinion that such articles should be sold and the sale proceeds utilized for other purposes of the same mosque provided that such funds can be transferred to another mosque if the original does not require them at all.

The donor is allowed to give away the old matting in charity provided he provides a new one in lieu of it. If the people living in the vicinity of the mosque want to have such matting, it can be given in charity to them if it is unsaleable. In case it can fetch a price it cannot be given away to them.

Grass growing on the land of a mosque should be sold, if saleable, otherwise the person cutting it can utilize it for his personal use.

If the cot for carrying the dead body is owned by the mosque and it has become old or has unserviceable, the residents of the locality can sell it with the permission of the Qazi. Similarly when the covering of the Ka'ba becomes old it can not be taken away by any one. The custodian of the Ka'ba can sell it and spend the sale proceeds on the same purpose.

The movable articles of a decaying mosque or if it is apprehended that some aggressor or tyrant may usurp it, may be sold and the sale proceeds may be kept for future use in an appropriate and permissible manner. It may be noted that repair of a decaying mosque would earn even more reward from God than constructing a new mosque.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ETIQUETTES OF THE DIVINE COURT

It is a common practice to observe rules or etiquette according to the status of the person and the master of the house. The higher his their status the greater and more elaborate are these rules of etiquette and protocol. For attending the Royal presence the Court manners are carefully learnt and observed by those allowed the privilege to attend a Royal Court. Consider the importance of learning the manners to be observed for an audience before the king of kings, the Almighty and for attending His house where man bows and prostrates before the *Omai* present Omniscient and Omnipotent Allah. The Qur'an speaks of the sanctity and purity of the house of God and calls upon men to observe proper manners in that august audience. The holy Prophet has given detailed instructions on the subject and has given warnings against breach of these rules and manners. These are for entering the mosque; for keeping the mosque clean and pure (sanctified), for sitting and offering prayers and for concentration and recitation of praises of God in the mosque. It will be good for the devotees to learn their value and grasp the wisdom of all these instructions and benefits that flow from observing these rules of etiquette.

INTENTION TO BE PURE AND PIOUS

The source of all action is mind, the intention, the will to do it. The Tradition of the holy Prophet with which Imam Bukhari has opened his compilation of the authentic Traditions that actions depend on intentions has been explained and commented upon in an earlier chapter. It is necessary that when one goes to a mosque his intention be pure and pious. His mind should be free from mundane affairs. There should not be any thing of hypocrisy or desire for name and fame. The mind should be full of thoughts of the Almighty, devotion mingled with awe because one false

step may lead down the hill and may wipe out all the merits earned throughout one's life. One may earn penalty instead of reward.

Explaining the greater reward for prayer with the congregation than for performing Salat individually, the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "This greater reward is earned when one makes ablution and proceeds to the mosque solely with the intention of performing Salat."

Another Tradition says, "Whoever comes to my mosque with a pious intention he is like a crusader in the path of Allah (earning the highest reward) otherwise he is like one who looks at the wealth of others with covetous eyes." Speaking of high rewards the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said that these greater rewards are earned because the man makes ablutions at home and then proceeds to the mosque with the sole intention of attending the congregational prayers.

It is necessary that for appearing in the audience of God in His house one should go with full preparations — cloths should be clean, body should be clean specially those limbs of the body which are most involved in the act of prayer i.e. face, hands, feet.

Abu Saeed Khudri (may God be pleased with him) says that the holy Prophet said, "Whoever recites this supplication while on his way to the mosque for attending prayers, Allah deposes seventy thousand angels to watch over him for safety and they keep praying for him until he has finished his Salat."

See how great is the reward for these few sentences. What a huge remuneration for so little labour ! The more we ponder over the immense benefits in this world and in the life after death that accrue from the order of the mosque, the greater is our feeling that it is a limitless ocean of bliss that God has provided for the faithful; no step in this path and no word in this process is without spiritual and material benefits.

When we go to the mosque let us realise that we are going for the audience before God Almighty. Let us see if our appearance is presentable in the Court of the King of Kings, whose authority and domain is so vast as no worldly Court can resemble. We must go there in our best form, clean dress, clean body and pure mind. The dress should be clean and free from all impurity, and proper as it should be when one visits such a great house, the house of the Lord Almighty. For example, the sleeves should be full length, the apparel appropriate. It is desirable to use perfume, if one can afford it, so that there is no trace of unpleasant smell of sweat left which is rather disturbing in a public gathering. A Tradition of the holy Prophet

says, "O' sons of Adam, put on your decent clothes when you come to the mosque."

On the way to mosque one must walk with dignity at moderate speed, it should portray the picture of the faithful as a calm and self-assured person. The gait should not betray either casualness or haste or such other traits which may lower the dignity of the faithful in the eyes of the onlookers. One may expect a reward for the Salat right from the moment he proceeds from his house to the mosque with the intention of performing Salat. For that he has to be in the mood of Salat all the way to the mosque. He should not indulge in trifles and jokes or in playfulness and should not cast his eyes on things forbidden. He should abstain from all such things which he is required to avoid during Salat. Eyes should be cast down, the heart should be filled with the awe of God and with His love, which creates a feeling of hope for the reward and fear for the penalty which any false step may attract. Humility and genial mind should be transparent on the face. And all this should not be for any ulterior motive or purpose but purely for the pleasure of God. A Tradition of the holy Prophet says, "When you proceed for Salat, walk in a manner calm and dignified."

The Prophet also said, "When you come to the Salat you should come calm and dignified. Whatever (part of the prayer) you get (when you are late) perform (with the congregation), and complete the portion you have missed. When someone makes an intention to perform Salat he is treated as if in the act of Salat."

One should go to the mosque on foot. It is not desirable to go to a mosque in a vehicle without a sound reasons. Every step that one takes towards the mosque is noted for reward. It washes away the sins as we have narrated in a lengthy Tradition in an earlier chapter. The first sentence in that Tradition is "To walk on foot for (joining) a congregational prayer is compensation for sins."

The moment one enters into the mosque is a great moment, if one realises that this is an entry in the great audience of the house of Lord. I have read reminences of pious men of the past and Ulama and Sufis which showed that their faces turned pale with fear and anxiety when they reached the gate of a mosque.

One should keep his right foot forward first and then the left foot while entering the mosque. It should be in the reverse order while leaving the mosque after prayers, i.e. left foot put first and then the right foot. When one has to put on shoes he should put shoe on the right foot first and then on the left foot but the left foot will be first in exit.

Anas (may God be pleased with him) says, "The practice of the Prophet was to enter the mosque with his right foot first in the mosque and while leaving he put the left foot out first.

Abu Usaid narrates that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When any one of you enters the mosque he should say, 'O' God, open the gates of Thy blessings and Mercy and at the time of exit (when he departs) he should say, O' God, I pray for Thy mercy and blessings.

GREETINGS IN ENTERING THE MOSQUE

On entering the mosque one should offer greetings in the usual manner if there are some people. If nobody is present, one should say, *As Salamo Alaina Min Rabbina Wa Ala Ibadillah-is-Salihin*. The Qur'an says :—

"But if ye enter houses, salute each other — a greeting of blessing and purity as from God." (Al-Qur'an XXIV-61)

After entering the mosque, if there is opportunity to do it, one should perform two Rak'at supererogatory Salat, called *Tahayyat-al-Masjid*, (in thanks—giving for attending the mosque). This may be done whether one is visiting for any scheduled prayers of the five times or some other prayer. However, these two Rak'ats, as indeed any Salat, should not be performed at a forbidden time, e.g. at the time of sun rise or sunset or when the sun starts declining just after having reached the meridian. *Ka'ab Bin Malik* narrates that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When any one of your enters the mosque he should perform two Rak'ats of Salat before resuming a seat."

But this Salat of thanks—giving should be performed only at the time of *Zuhr*, *Asr* and *Isha* and not at the time of *Maghrib* and *Fajr*. No Salat is permissible before the prescribed compulsory three Rak'ats at the time of Maghrib; while at the time of *Fajr*, no supererogatory prayers are to be performed either before or after the Fajr Salat. Only two Rak'ats (sunnat) before the compulsory two Rakats of Fajr are mentioned in the Tradition of the holy Prophet.

If one gets busy with the *Fardh* (compulsory Rak'ats) or traditional (Sunnat) Rak'ats, as for example, when one enters the mosque at the time the congregational prayer has already commenced or is about to commence and there is no time to perform the two Rak'ats of thanks—giving prayer, these two Rak'ats of thanks-giving are waived.

Shah Abdul Aziz says : If one performs the compulsory or traditional Salat after the practice of Prophet immediately on entering the mosque

(under the circumstances explained above) then it is all right, but otherwise one should first perform the two Rak'ats of thanks-giving. If one has, instead, performed the compulsory and traditional Rak'ats of the scheduled Salat, then the duty of performing the thanks-giving two Rak'ats stands waived.

In this commentary he says, "One should first perform the thanks-giving Rak'ats and then greet the people in the mosque. The thanks-giving prayer is just like offering greetings to the mosque, which is the obligation one owes to God. And Salaam is the obligation one owes to his fellowmen. The obligation owed to God has precedence over that owed to his fellowmen.

CONDUCT OF WORLDLY AFFAIRS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

In the mosque one should resume his seat wherever he finds a place. He should not jump over others to reach the front row, nor should make noise for making a place for himself. One should not make others squeeze in order to accommodate himself. One should not cross in front of those performing Salat, nor should twist his fingers as is the habit of some people in their ideal time. In short one should abstain from all such acts which are against decorum and are looked upon as undesirable in the eyes of Shariah. If possible, one should engage himself in meditation and in reciting praises of God. Otherwise one should sit quiet and still.

One should abstain from talking of worldly affairs, even though these may be concerning things permissible (and talking about these outside the mosque may be perfectly in order). We notice these days that people are generally inclined to talk about all sorts of worldly affairs in the mosque. So we deal with this aspect in some detail here : The holy Qur'an says :—

"And the places of worship are for God (alone); so invoke not any one along with God."
('Al-Qur'an LXXII-18).

The commentators have elaborately dealt with the question of talking about worldly affairs and have explained that the house of God is reserved exclusively for prayer and reciting praises of God.

The author of the *Jamal* says : The meaning of this verse is that the house is meant exclusively for the remembrance of God, So do not let any one else have a share in it.

The *Tafsirat-e-Ahmadi* is more explicit about it: "The conclusion from this verse is that it is not permissible to talk of worldly affairs in the mosque."

At another place the holy Qur'an says :

"(Lit is such a light)

In houses, which God hath permitted to be raised to honour, for them celebration, in them, of His name : In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings (again and again)".

(Al-Qur'an XXIV-36)

It is only proper that when one is in the tranquil atmosphere of the mosque his mind should be concentrated on the Majesty of God and His mercy and all other thoughts be banished from the mind.

A WARNING BY THE HOLY PROPHET

In the life time of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) the sanctity of the mosque and its decorum was strictly observed by the companions. The Caliphs continued observing it in their life time. The Muslims in those days could not think of talking about any personal or worldly affairs in the mosque. Even so the holy Prophet foresaw laxity creeping into the ranks of Muslims and warned against degeneration likely to set in among the Muslims in course of time. He instructed, "Do not mix (sit) with those who talk of worldly affairs in the mosque for God does not need them." Talking of worldly affairs in the mosque is so undesirable that the holy Prophet thought it necessary to warn the Ummah against it hundreds of years in advance.

Caliph Ali (may God be pleased with him) once said that "a time will come when Islam will be only for namesake and the Qur'an will be only a symbol; there will be mosques but they will not resound with the praises of God."

One shudders to think that the present times in which we are living might be the times referred to by Caliph Ali. The intellectuals as well as the communality need to do some introspection and improve their conduct in this respect.

We have quoted in an earlier chapter the Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) about the mosques being the best place on earth. It bears repeating it here :

"The best places in the eyes of God are the mosques and the worst places are the market places."

Business deals and worldly matters are attended to in the markets which

have been described as a worst place. Consider how unworthy it is to talk of the things of the worst place in the best of places.

POLITICAL SPEECHES IN THE MOSQUES

The use of mosques for political meetings and speeches is becoming increasingly common these days. Due consideration to the sanctity of the mosque is not given and decorum is not maintained. Irresponsible and frivolous talks are not desirable any where. How could such things be permissible in the mosque ? A Tradition says, "Save the mosques from children, disputes, noise, loud talks, from the execution of penalty and drawn swords (i.e. even the penalty lawfully awarded by a competent authority like a *Qadhi* should not be executed in the mosque). It may be executed elsewhere outside the mosque. Similarly swords should not be drawn inside the mosque. We find that these instructions are violated these days. Worst of all, some speeches hurt the sentiments and harm interests of the Muslims.

There is no harm in talking about things concerning the faith. In fact this is a part of the purpose of the mosque. Such political matters which have a bearing on the faith and the faithful may be discussed. In the times of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) the mosque was the centre of such consultations. However respect and regard for the sanctity of the mosque and its decorum is necessary at all times.

SPEAKING LOUDLY IN THE MOSQUE

We have noted in the preceding lines the Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) that in a mosques one should not raise his voice at a high pitch. The companions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) observed this rule with their usual dedication and devotion. Their conduct in this behalf may serve as a beacon light. Saib Bin Yazid (may God be pleased with him) narrates that one day he was asleep in the mosque when some one threw a pebble to wake him up. He saw that it was Caliph Omar who had woken him up. The Caliph pointed out two men who were making noise in the mosque and asked Saib to catch hold of them and bring them to him. Accordingly he brought them to the Caliph. He asked them where they lived. They replied that they belonged to Taif. Or hearing this Omar said, "If you had been residents of Madinah, I would have punished you for making noise in the mosque. However, I excuse you today because you have come from outside."

Indeed Omar (may God be pleased with him) was very strict in this matter. He did not tolerate the slightest disrespect to the mosque. He used his whip even if he found children playing in the mosque. He kept watch over the mosque even after the prayers of Isha. Nisai has recorded an instance that once Omar heard some one speaking loudly in the mosque. Admonishingly he said, "Do you know (the sanctity of the place) where you are at the moment?"

Omar the great (may God be pleased with him) had a platform made on one side of the mosque and announce that anybody who wanted to recite poetry or talk of something other than prayer and praise of God should go out of the mosque to that platform but no one should recite poetry or talk of anything other than prayer and praise of Allah inside the mosque. This platform was called *Batiha*.

There is difference of opinion among the Ulama as to whether raising one's voice to a loud pitch in the mosque is totally forbidden or it is permissible under certain circumstances. The majority view is that in case talking in a loud tone is called for in the religious or temporal interests of the Muslims it is permissible to raise one's voice, otherwise not. In this connection a Tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is cited which narrates that Ka'b Bin Malik (may God be pleased with him) asked Ibn Hadad to repay his loan. He made this demand in the mosque in a loud voice. The holy Prophet lifted the curtain of his room and told them by sign to waive half of the loan and told Ibn Hadad to pay the balance. But he did not demonstrate or say anything on their talking loudly.

"To make search or enquire about the thing lost is not permissible in the mosque because loud voices, noise and disturbance is unavoidable in such circumstances. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When one hears some one making enquiries about some lost property in the mosque one should say : may God not return it to you', because the mosque is not meant for that purpose."

In this Tradition the holy Prophet (peace be on him) has not only forbidden people from making enquiries about the lost property but also expressed his displeasure and gave the reasons for doing so. However, there does not appear to be any objection on searching or making enquiries about some thing which has been lost inside the mosque itself. But in doing so due regard should be given to the sanctity of the mosque and its decorum.

Commenting on this Tradition Imam Nawavi says that it is not proper

to do any work of art or craft, manufacture or such other profession in the mosque before these are things of personal concern. However when it concerns the interest of Muslims in general it is permissible, for example, the repairs of war weapons for Jihad (the holy wars) can be undertaken in a mosque. It is also a part of the decorum and respect for the sanctity of the mosque that poetry is not recited as a part of literary activity. However verses in praise of God and His Prophet (peace be on him) or verses which concern the glory of faith may be recited when necessary. But this can be done only when the original purpose of the mosque is not disturbed. A Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) says, "The holy Prophet (peace be on him) has forbidden recitation of verses or business deals of sale and purchase in the mosque.

Little children who do not understand the decorum and sanctity of the mosque and those grown up men who are mentally retarded as, for example, lunatics or imbeciles, should not be allowed to enter the mosque lest they offend its sanctity. The jurists have held that if they are likely to desecrate of the mosque in any way, their entry should be forbidden. It is the responsibility of sane persons to stop them from entering the mosque.

A Tradition of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) says, "Protect your mosque from children and lunatics, from business deals, noise and disturbances, from executing the penalties inside the mosque and from drawing swords (fighting)." As regards the prohibition of executing penalties inside the mosques, Ibn Majah has quoted two Traditions of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) on the subject.

"Penalties should not be executed in the mosque, said the holy Prophet who has forbidden flogging inside the mosque even in compliance of vadi's order for inflicting such penalty."

It is not permissible to take unsheathed weapons in the mosque. It is also not permissible to sharpen the edged weapons in the mosque as this is against the decorum of the mosque. The mosque should not be used as a passage.

The holy Prophet said, "There are certain things which should not be done in the mosque. It should not be used as a passage, nor weapons should be sharpened in it, nor the bows be pulled, nor arrows spread (scattered), nor raw meat should be taken inside the mosque, nor should it be used for executing penalties, nor for receiving compensation, nor yet should it be turned into a market-place (negotiating business deals)."

The sanctity of the mosque does not permit that funeral prayer (Namaz Janazah) should be performed inside the mosque.

The holy Prophet (peace be on him) said that whoever performs *Namaz Janazah* inside the mosque will get nothing in reward. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) never performed any funeral prayer inside the mosque.

"The custom and practice of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) was to perform the *Namaz Janazah* out side the mosque except for reasons valid according to Shariah. However, it is legally permissible to perform *Namaz Janazah* inside as well as out side the mosque, but it is preferable to perform it outside. Ulama have therefore considered *Namaz Janazah* inside the mosque as abominable.

It is also forbidden to walk across in front of a man performing prayer. The holy Prophet said, 'If one knew the extent of sin (and therefore the penalty for it) of crossing across in front of praying man, he would prefer to keep standing at one place for forty years rather than walk across in front of him. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) has permitted the praying man to stop another man from crossing in front of him (to the extent of his capacity) and has declared such a person (who crosses in front of the praying man) as a devil (Satan). It is also relevant that the praying man should also be careful and considerate. He should not stand for prayer where men are forced to go across in front of him in order to reach vacant places or for some other reason.

WOMEN'S ENTRY INTO THE MOSQUE

It is true that the holy Prophet had permitted women to attend the mosque and they performed *Salat* with the congregation. Orders were also given to them to attend *Idgah* for *Id* prayers and there was not restriction for them in visiting *Idgah* whether they were pure or under impure condition for example. in the menstruation period (for attending the mosque). It appears that it was with a view to demonstrate the strength of Muslims in numbers. Now it is no more needed. In an overall view of the many Traditions on the subject, it is seen that while women were permitted to attend the mosque it was still deemed preferable that they do not go out of the home. The permission was for the *Isha* and *Fajr* prayers when it is dark. They were also told, "It is better for a woman to offer prayers inside than in the *varandah* and still better in her closet. It means that a woman's prayer is best when performed in the maximum *pardah*. Woman may however forego what is best for them and choose the less appreciated yet a permissible course. The mosque is the house of God and women going there for performing prayers cannot be stopped. A Tradition says, "Do not

stop your women from attending the mosque, but it is better if they perform the Salat at home."

What more could be said : The instructions are clear enough. Women can not be stopped from attending the mosque; but it is better that they say their Salat at home. It appeals to reason also. Every body knows that women have a menstruation period during which they cannot say Salat and cannot attend the mosque. This is a personal secret for every woman and no woman would like this personal secret to be commonly known (It would be betrayed by their absence from the mosque). Again, while permission has been given to women to attend the mosque it is also enjoined that they should go out of their homes without cosmetic make up or sartorial glamour, in sort with an appearance sans charm and glamour so as not be provocative for the onlookers. Other Traditions on the subject read :—

"When any woman attends the mosque let her not use fragrance (let not a woman use fragrance even when she visits the mosque.)"

"And those women who go out (of their houses) should go out sans glamour." These conditions on the attendance of women in the mosque indicate that it was rought with possibilities of evil consequences. Aisha (may God be pleased with her) was forced to observe soon after the holy Prophet's death. "If the holy Prophet (peace be on him) had seen the laxity which has come about in the women he would have stopped them, like the women of Israil, from attending the mosque." This saying of 'Aisha indicates that soon after the death of the Prophet (peace be on him) there had set in a change among Muslim women and the companions were forced to take corrective steps. It is in view of these Traditions and circumstances that Jurists say that women, specially young women, should not attend the mosque. There is no bar in principle on women attending the mosque. It is permitted, but with wise caution.

"If any of your women asks permission to attend the mosque, do not refuse it", says a Tradition of the Prophet. Wherever women's attendance in the mosque is mentioned it is mentioned as permissible, nowhere has it been enjoined upon women to attend the mosque. What is said is that when they ask for permission you should not refuse it.

It is a right granted by the Shariah. The holy Prophet did not deny them the right. However, he prudently advised them that it was better if they did not go out of their house, rather he persuaded them not to do so.

The Ulama who have permitted women to attend the mosque in view of the Traditions of the holy Prophet have laid down conditions too. Nawavi (my God be pleased with him) says:

"Women should not be stopped from attending the mosque provided they abode by the conditions laid down for them. For example, they should not use scent on their cloth, should not have glamour about them, should not wear on their foot (and legs) such ornaments as produce twinkling sound, should not mix with men, should not be young nor have a provocative bearing and there should be no possibility of any evil influence."

Shaikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi (may God be pleased with him) say, "In the present age it is undesirable for women to attend the mosque for joining the congregational prayers, because it is fraught with evil and mischief. In the days of the holy Prophet there was permission, but it was for the purpose of learning the teachings of Islam. That purpose no more demands their attendance in the mosque, for the teaching of Islam are commonly available (at their house). In any case it is preferable that women should remain in *pardah*."

We may mention here that certain things and acts are permissible in the mosque. Open of these things is resolving disputes between two individuals or groups of Muslims. Similarly it is permitted that if some one asks a question (about the Law of Shariah) it should be explained to him but it has to be ensured that this does not disturb those engaged in prayers and that the sanctity of the mosque and decorum are maintained. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) settled disputes among Muslims and explained matters of the law in the mosque. Indeed he held in the mosque councils of advisers (his companions) for consultations on religious and such worldly matters as were of common concern and took decisions and issued orders. It is in view of these Traditions that the jurists have said, "The work of settling disputes and deciding matters of public interest of Muslims is a part of prayer, and therefore like Salat, it is permissible in the mosque."

Tabarani has recorded an episode that on a Friday the holy Prophet was delivering the sermon when a man came forward and asked the holy Prophet to award punishment to him. The holy Prophet asked him to sit down and then asked him for what sin he wanted the penalty to be awarded. He confessed having committed adultery. The holy Prophet asked his companions to take him away and lash him (as a prescribed penalty for adultery).

Omar the Second Caliph (may God be pleased with him) once decided a dispute between two Muslims under the procedure of *Li'an*. The Third Caliph Uthman (may God be pleased with him) also decided disputed cases

in the mosque. Abu Bakr bin Muhammad bin Hazam and Sa'ad bin Abdul Rahman bin Auf also decided litigations and disputes in the mosque and so did Sharaih (may God be pleased with him) and Imam Sha'bee.

Many other instances of settlement of disputes and hearing of litigation in the mosque by several other eminent jurists, rulers and judges (Qazis) have been reported. No objection to or rejection of this practice by any leading jurists is reported nor by any companion or by their successors of the next generation.

There is no doubt that in the course of litigation occasions come when litigant parties may and do resort to coecal facts, tell half truths or speak outright lies but it does not affect the purposefulness of the service of the community in the settlement of disputes. In the days of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) himself a decision by process of *Li'an* is reported. In this process each of the two disputing parties makes some assertion on oath. The assertion of one of the two parties is bound to be false yet his falsehood would not cause any legal (according to Shariah) obstacle in the matter of settling the dispute in the mosque. Of course in cases where one of the parties is not fit to enter the mosque (for example a woman in her menstruation period) then the case has to be heard outside the mosque.

The volunteers preparing for Jihad may carry out their exercises in the use of arms within a mosque. That will be an act in the service of Islam. 'Aisha (may God be pleased with her) has narrated that some negros were practising javelin throwing, she witnessed this exercise reclining on the shoulders of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). Tahavi has confirmed this episode and called this sport a desirable exercise.

It is permissible to eat in the mosque when necessary. For a traveller and for one who is E'tikaf it is clearly permitted. For others too it is not absolutely prohibited or sinful. Some Ulama have called it undesirable and disapproved though not being forbidden.

Ibn-e-Majah in the Chapter of eating in the mosque reports a companion as saying, "We used to eat bread with meat in the mosque." It is narrated in another Tradition: "The holy Prophet (peace be on him) was sitting in the mosque, bread and meat was served before him. He ate it. The narrator says he was also with the holy Prophet at the meal. After finishing the meal he cleaned his hands with pebbles and then he said the Salat". However, the permission to eat inside the mosque is with the condition that the mosque should not be polluted.

The traveller and the mu'takif (the man who stays in the mosque for the sole purpose of staying here for prayers) may sleep in the mosque. As

regards others different Ulama hold different opinions. Some have considered it as disapproved while others say that in the hour of need there is no objection to one's sleeping in the mosque. However, it is best to avoid it as far as possible. Jurists have said that when someone other than a traveller and the mu'takif has of necessity to sleep in the mosque let him make an intention for E'tikaf and he should spend sometime in saying Salat and concentration on remembrance of God. There is a Tradition in which it is narrated that Abdullah bin Omar slept in the mosque. He was a bachelor then. Abdullah and his father were migrants from Makkah and the migrants were in indigent circumstances. May be that Omar did not build a spacious house.

Imam Bukhari has devoted a full chapter on sleeping in the women of mosque. He has recorded a rather lengthy Tradition and contended that women may sleep in the mosque. The Tradition narrates the episode of a woman who slept in the mosque. 'Aisha (may God be pleased with her) in this connection says : "A tent (or a house like a tent) was erected for her in the mosque."

An episode of Ali (may God be pleased with him) is also reported in the Traditions. One day the holy Prophet (peace be on him) went to his daughter, Fatima's house. Ali was not present. He learnt that Ali had left the house in a huff. The holy Prophet sent out men to search him and learnt that Ali was asleep in the mosque. The holy Prophet went to the mosque. He saw Ali that was sleeping, his apparel had slipped aside and dust had covered the naked portion of the body. He affectionately brushed the dust off his body and called out 'Rise, O' Abu Turab, Rise O' Abu Turab', Abu means father, Turab means dust clay, sand.

Things which are public property and not of any individual's property may be stored in the mosque and their distribution among Muslims may also be made in the mosque. The collect Zakat, Fitrah or to store the booty obtained in Jihad in the mosque is permissible but on condition that it does not disturb the prime purpose of the mosque, i.e. offering prayers.

When some booty was received from Bahrain, the holy Prophet ordered, 'Put it in the mosque', and then after saying the Salat he distributed it.

One day the holy Prophet (peace be on him) came out of his house. He had his staff in his hand. He saw a bunch of grapes in the mosque which had been sent for the poor. But it was some what damaged and decayed. The holy Prophet hit the bunch with his staff and said, 'If you have to give it away in charity give good quality of grapes'. In his commentary on this

Tradition Ibn Hajar (may God be pleased with him) has written that one may supply cool drinking water in the mosque during summers etc.

In the holy Prophet's (peace be on him) lifetime the mosque served as a prison house too. Only later on a separate prison house was made when circumstances required it. An episode is recorded of Thumama Bin Athal when he was brought in captivity and was tied to a pillar of the mosque. When the holy Prophet (peace be on him) came, he ordered his release. On being released he went to a nearby orchard, washed himself and embraced Islam. The mosque served as a prison house upto the time of Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him). During the Caliphate of Omar a separate house for the prison was purchased for four thousand dinars. Some say that a regular prison was established during the Caliphate of 'Ali (may God be pleased with him).

From the episode of Thumama bin Athal. It is also established that a non-believer's entry into the mosque is permissible. If it were not permissible how could he have been brought into the mosque. It is also recorded that Jews and Christians came (from outside) direct to the mosque and met the holy Prophet there. Hafiz Ibn Qayyim has written that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) received the delegation from Thaqif in the mosque and had a tent erected there for them so that they could hear the recitation of the holy Qur'an and see how the Muslims said Salat. After narrating this episode, Hafiz Ibn Hajar concludes that entry of the *Kafir* and *Mushrik* (the non-believers and those who take partners to God) into the mosque is permissible.

Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi (may God be pleased with him) is more explicit on this point. He says that the great Imam Abu Hanifa (may God be pleased with him) is of the view that the *Kafir* and *Mushrik* may enter into every mosque, for the Prophet (peace be on him) received the guests in the mosque even though they were Kafirs, as he did in case of the delegation from Thaqif. He also made arrangements for the stay of other delegations in the mosque. It is also established by several reports that Jews and Christians came to the mosque to meet the holy Prophet and sat down without waiting for being asked to be seated. Thumama Bin Athal was tied to the pillar of the mosque while he was still a non-believer. An suppression of this principle and practice is not on record.

.If there is apprehension of damage to the property of the mosque it is permissible to close the door of the mosque. The jurists and scholars are all agreed on this. But the door will have to be kept open at the time of prayers so that people may come for saying Salat. Even at other times the

door though closed must be attended by some one to open it for those who come for saying Salat individually and no inconvenience should be caused to those coming for prayer. Expenditure may be incurred on posting a man for opening the door. Closing the door for fear of theft does not fall under the condemned act referred to in the verse, "And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in the place of worship of God, God's name should be celebrated." What is condemned in this verse is the act of stopping people from Salat. But closing the door for security purposes is not the same as stopping people from Salat.

Commentators have, in explaining the occasion for the revelation of this verse, made a reference to the *Byzantians* who desecrated the holy mosque at Jerusalem or to the non-believers of Makkah who stopped Muslims from entering the holy Ka'ba in the year of the treaty of Hudaibia. (This treaty was made when Muslims were stopped on their way to Makkah to perform Umrah). But the injunction in this verse is of universal application. The condemnation under this verse would cover those cases where some one closes the door and stops people from praying. Of course no Muslim would close the door with the intention of preventing people from prayer. The author personally feels that if Muslims of one school of thought stop men of another school from entering the mosque to avoid dispute and mischief and only people of one school hold congregational prayers then too their act will not amount to be an act condemnable under this verse, for it is also enjoined (as has been explained earlier) that the mosque should be saved from being the venue of disputes and mischief.

Like other purposes for which the mosque may be used, as has been discussed in the forgoing pages, imparting of religious knowledge is also permissible. Indeed this system of religious teaching is continuing in the mosques since the times of the holy Prophet (peace be on him). The holy Prophet (peace be on him) himself held religious discourses in the mosque. *Suffa* where religious teaching was imparted was located in the Masjid-e-Nabawi. The Islamic schools were first established in the mosques and this system continued till the fourth century. A.H. of several schools running in the mosques are mentioned in the compilations of Traditions and their commentaries. There the teachers imparted knowledge without any remuneration. Maulana Hakim Abdul Hai (may God be pleased with him) in his 'History of Gujrat' and 'Yad-e-Ayyam' says :—

"The first building which our preceptor, the holy Prophet (peace be on him) built, the Masjid-e-Nabawi, was our first madrasa. The mosque built since then may all be treated as madrasas. The old

method of teaching was that the teacher came to the mosque and disciples gathered around him for information.

"The teacher imparted knowledge purely for the pleasure of God. The disciples took their lessons from him eagerly (braving all hardships and discomforts). Austerity marked their single-minded devotion to learning.

They carried on their studies unmindful of discomfort, studying late at night under candle light as if the smoke of the lamp served for food. Young Princes too, came there and sat at the feet of the teacher if they wanted to learn. This system continued till the fourth century A.H. Then for the first time a grand building was built for a school at Nishapur and salaries were fixed for teachers and stipend were given to students."

The Maulana has mentioned some mosques in India which served as madrasa, Among them the Atala Masjid of Jaunpur, Wazir Khan's mosque at Laboure, Mahim Begum's mosque at New Delhi, Fatehpuri mosque at old Delhi and Marjan Shami mosque at Surat have been specially mentioned as important seats of learning.

In Mau (district Azamgarh) the masjid at Katra has been used for madrasas for a long time. The madrasas is still continuing by the name of Miftahul Ulum where the author had the privilege of studying. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi has made a mention of this madrasa in his 'Hayat-e-Shibli.'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CLEANLINESS OF THE MOSQUE

Man by nature likes to keep his surroundings clean to the best of his capacity. And he maintains it in fine shape according to his status.

It is important and essential to keep the mosque clean and in fine shape, for it is the house of God, the Almighty. God Himself has accorded honour to it Muslims gather there for prayers in their best outfit and duly purified. Of course, moderation is required in this as in all other things. It should neither be carried to the extreme to become pompous nor the mosque should be neglected and left dirty. Keeping such moderation in view, we must keep the mosques clean and in fine shape.

“We took a covenant from Ibrahim and Ismail that they shall keep my house clean and pure for those who will go round it, and those who will stay in it and for those who will come and how and prostrate there.”
(Al-Qur'an II 125)

This verse refers to a special occasion to a particular house, the Masjid-al-Haram at Makkah but it is of universal application. The commentators have therefore said in this connection that it is necessary to keep the mosques clean and fine in all respects, in appearance and also in their peaceful, calm and elevating atmosphere. There should be no dirtiness around nor any idols, nor sin nor mischief.

The covenant to keep the Baitullah as well as other and mosques clean is addressed to the great apostles, one after another. This itself shows the great sanctity and dignity attached to these houses of worship. The mother of Marian vowed that if a son was born to her she would dedicate him for the service of the mosque.

The Qur'an says : —“Behold ! a woman of 'Insaan said”,

“I am lord I do dedicate into these what is in my womb for they

special. Service so accept this of me, thou hearest and Knowest all things.”
(Al Qur'an III 35.)

Commenting on this verse Imam Bukhari has elaborated on the cleanliness and fine shape of the mosques.

There are many Traditions of the holy Prophet on the subject. We mention below only a few of them.

Once the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said, “The rewards of good deeds of my Ummah were presented before me. The good deeds included the dirt which a man had swept out of the mosque.

The Arabic word used in the saying of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) is *Quzah* which means a small blade of dry grass which may fall into one's eye. How painful it is and how quickly one tries to remove it. The use of this word in the holy Prophet's saying underscores that dirt even in such small quantity should not be allowed in the mosque and should be removed most quickly.

Hazi. Anas, a constant companion and personal attendant of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) has narrated that once the holy Prophet sighted some sputum lying near the front wall of the mosque. He was deeply anguished and displeasure was apparent on his face. He got up and cleaned the place with his own hands. Then he addressed the companions : O'men, when any one of you stands for salat he is, as if, in communion with God. God's glory shines in front of him with all the divine merciful blessings; so do not spit in front of you. If some one is unavoidably forced to spit during salah he should throw the sputum on the left side or under foot.” Then he demonstrated, took a corner of his cloth sheet and spat on it and rubbed it; and said “he should be like this.”

In another Tradition it is stated, “Spitting is sinful and its atonement (expiatory) is burying it.”

If somebody spits in the mosque, it should be covered with earth. If floor is of earth let it be scratched away. If the floor is cemented it should be washed or cleaned with cloth. It should be so cleaned that no trace of dirt remains and if possible some fragrant detergent should be use. Qaffal says in his Fatwa that the injunction to bury refers to the sputum which is exerted from the mouth or from the head but the cough which rises from the chest (of course excreted through mouth) should in no case be buried inside the mosque. The Arabic word *dafn* (translated has buried means to clear off so that . . . trace of its remains.

It is narrated about Abu Obaidah bin Al Jarrah that one evening he spat in the mosque and forgot to clean it. On reaching home he remembered it. He took a light with him came to the mosque and cleaned the place.

A Tradition is narrated by Abu Zar (may God be pleased with him) that the holy Prophet (peace be on him) said "Among the misdeeds of my Ummah I also found the thick sputum which was spat in the mosque and was not cleaned. The sin of polluting the mosque gets noted in one's record of deeds and the sinner will be faced with it on the day of Judgement. Every Muslim should take care not to throw even the tiniest of dirt and should clean it if he sees it. The Imam is all the more responsible for observing this on his own part and ensuring compliance by others. The holy Prophet (peace be on him) has himself done it and showed us the way.

Saib Ibn Fidar (may God be pleased with him) narrates that some one acted as the Imam of his people. He spat in the front of him during the prayer and the holy Prophet (peace be on him) saw it. He was much annoyed anguished. He emphatically said, do not let him lead the congregation against people did not allow him afterwards to act as an Imam. When he learnt to this he called upon the holy Prophet and narrated what he had heard. The holy Prophet told him that he had indeed stopped him from leading the congregation because he had summed against the Allah and His Apostle by spitting in the mosque. This incident shows the polluting the mosque is not an ordinary sin. It is a major sin which causes anguish to God and His apostle; it is fair to remove the sinner from his post in punishment.

In contrast of the penalty mentioned above, there is a great reward for cleaning the mosque and keeping it clean. Abu Hurairah narrates that a negro who used to work on sweeping and cleaning the mosque died and the holy Prophet was not informed of it. When the next day the holy Prophet (peace be on him) did not see that person he enquired about him. On learning of his sudden death he asked why was he not informed, then enquired about his grave and went there and offered supplications to God for his salvation. The narrator is not sure whether the person was a man or a woman. But it transpires from study of different reports that the black person was woman and her name was Umm-e-Mahjan.

Abu Saeed Khudri (may God be pleased with him) narrates that the holy Prophet (please be on him) said, "When you see a man serving the mosque, testify to his being a man of faith."

The Arabic word Ta'ahud translated here as 'serving includes sweeping.

Omar, the Second Caliph (may God be pleased with him) visited the Masjid-e-Quba on Mondays and Thursdays. One day he saw that the mosque had not been cleaned. He himself took a date leaf and cleaned the mosque. Then he asked people to keep the mosque clean of the cobwebs etc.

One day he said "You should keep the mosque clean from every pollution because prayer to God is performed here and Qur'an is recited."

A Tradition of the holy Prophet, says, "God will make a house in heaven for whoever removes dirt from the mosque."

Every Muslim would be tempted to serve the mosque for the great reward promised for it.

It must have been clear now that it is not permissible to enter the mosque with stinking clothes or unclean body whose odour may inconvenience others. One should avoid it to the best of his ability. The body and clothes should be cleaned when one comes to mosque. One of the important reasons for emphasis laid on bath on Friday is to remove bad odour because people sweat in a large gathering and then its odour causes inconvenience to the angels and men gathered for prayer. It is against decorum of the august assembly in the audience of God.

Abdullah bin Abbas explained to certain visitors from Iraq. the circumstances under which orders for bath on Fridays were given. In the congregations there were those who worked as labourers, their clothes were soiled. Sometimes they carried loads on their back. The mosque was small and its ceiling low which could be called a hut. One day in the summer season when the holy Prophet came to the mosque he found that people were sweating and bad smell spread from their clothes. Noticing it, he said, "O, men, when this day comes you should wash and then come to the mosque and use some good scent or scented oil whatever you can afford."

Like body and clothes, cleanliness of mouth is also necessary lest and bad smell spreads around in the mosque when someone opens his mouth to speak and causes inconvenience to others. Mouth should be washed and cleaned well before coming to the mosque and no such thing may be taken which may cause bad smell from the mouth.

The holy Prophet's Traditions lay emphasis on the use of *Miswak* and laud its virtues. This is also because decorum demands that when one appears in audience before God almighty, necessary etiquette, due courtesies of the great audience are observed. The holy Prophet was very particular about cleanliness of the mouth. He never missed to clean his teeth with *Miswak* while making ablution and he used the *Miswak* many times in between. He also impressed upon the Ummah to do the same. Once he said that if it were not hard upon my Ummah he would have enjoined the use of *Miswak* at the time of each prayer. According to another Tradition the holy Prophet said, "*Miswak* cleanses the mouth and earns pleasure of God."

The holy Prophet has therefore told that before going to mosque one should not eat such things whose flavour in the mouth does not vanish quickly, e.g. raw onions and garlic. Said the holy Prophet, "Whoever likes onion let him keep away from the mosque."

In another narration of the Tradition he is reported to have said, "Whoever likes of this plant (onion) let him keep away from our mosque; for the angels are inconvenienced with things that cause inconvenience to men."

For the same reason it is not proper to burn kerosene oil in the mosque, for its bad smell causes inconvenience. Similarly, one should not enter the mosque without cleaning his mouth after smoking Bidi, Cigarettes or Hugga, and obviously, smoking in the mosque is a great sin. Jurists have said that whosoever is found with such unpleasant smell which causes inconvenience to others may be turned out of the mosques even if he has to be dragged out bodily. But his beard and hair should not be caught.

Removal of cobweb is an important part of cleanliness. These cause great inconvenience, specially to men of fine taste. The instructions given by Omar the Second Caliph (may God be pleased with him) at the Masjid-e-Quba to keep it clean of cobwebs have been mentioned earlier.

Passing of wind is also a source of bad odour and causes inconvenience to people. Some Ulama have considered it undesirable to pass wind in the mosque. However, the man who is staying in the mosque or is in *E'tikaf* is excused. In any case, it is best to avoid it. In Tradition it has been stated that angels keep praying for the men engaged in Salat until they pass wind.

Not only should the mosques be saved from pollution and dirt but it

is also desired to keep the environment pleasant. The following direction occurs in the lengthy Tradition :—

“Make bath rooms at the gates of mosques, and on Fridays burn some incense there.”

Omar, the Second Caliph (may God be pleased with him) had issued orders that incense should be burnt in the mosque of every city in the afternoons. Such arrangements should be made more particularly on Fridays.

Arrangements for lighting in the mosque is also an act of piety and will be highly rewarded by God.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WAQF AND ITS MANAGEMENT

The owner of a property donated as Waqf for a mosque ceases to have any proprietary right over it whatsoever. Therefore it is a requisite condition of the Waqf that he (the donor) serves all proprietary rights over the land as well as from the passage of its access and gives a general permission to public at large to say Salat in that mosque. If even one man says Salat after this general permission, it becomes a mosque for all purposes. Severance of the proprietary rights of the donor would mean that the ownership now rests with Allah and possession will be deemed to have been given to the mosque. Some jurists say that in order to prove the (transfer of) possession from the donor to the mosques it is necessary that congregational prayer is held in that building or on that plot of land because the purpose of the mosque is congregational prayers. Individual Salat can be said any where. The purpose of Azan and Aqamat is also to gather the congregation and arrange it for prayer. This means that if there is only one person to say the Salat but he calls the Azans and Iqamat before that, it is sufficient proof of the transfer of possession.

Imam Abu Yusuf that a simple declaration by the donor for the donated building/land is enough for the property acquiring the status of a mosque.

MANAGEMENT

The donor has a right to keep the management with himself and his family or to nominate any one of his choice as the *Mutawalli*. But when the *Mutawalli* (Manager) suffers from any disqualifications as given in the law of Shariah, he shall be removed from his post if he becomes insane or physically incapacitated, or develops loose character e.g. he takes alcohol, indulges in speculation. If a manager commits breach of trust the Qazi may remove him from managership. If a manager suffers from mental

disease for one year he shall automatically cease to be manager. However, on regaining health he can become the manager again.

If the Wāqf (donor) has made it a condition that managership will remain with him and after him with his progeny, then the Qazi cannot appoint another person as manager until clear case of breach of trust or some other disqualification is proved against that person. In case the Qazi removes the Mutawalli (manager) without proof of any such disqualification, his action will not be deemed to be valid.

When the managership is not reserved for any person or family or the right of selection of a manager vests in the congregation then the choice should be for a man who does not hanker after this office. For the man who hankers after on office has some ulterior motive and generally does not possess a sense of responsibility.

The right of appointing a Mutawalli vests in the Waqf (donor), in the public administrator, the Qadhi or in the persons whom the donor names for exercising this right. Where there is no Islamic government the donors generally give this right to the people of the locality who are devoted to faith and are virtuous in conduct.

In selecting a manager it is necessary to keep in view that he be trustworthy, honest, God-fearing and pious. He should not be a pilferer, or thief or spend thrift. He should be sane and adult. Blindness is no bar. A man as well as a woman can be appointed mutawalli (manager). A mutawalli has no right to appoint another person as mutawalli in his own place. However, if he has been given absolute rights he may do so.

DUTIES OF A MUTAWALLI (MANAGER)

A mutawalli does not have absolute rights and unlimited powers. The law of *Shariah* has defined his powers and duties. A Mutawalli cannot exceed these powers and cannot go beyond the scope of his duties. If the Waqf has fixed any remuneration for the manager it is valid for him to take it, otherwise he may charge reasonable remuneration for his labour.

The mutawalli may appoint men for cleaning a mosque and to attend to other needs as warranted. He will fix the remuneration as may be reasonable and in keeping with the custom of the place. If he pays more he will be answerable for it. He can pay any amount and higher remuneration from his own pocket.

The mutawalli can purchase property from the savings of the Waqf property for augmenting the income of the Waqf and such property will also be Waqf. But it will not be fully governed by the rules of Waqf i.e. it can be sold when necessary, while the Waqf property cannot be sold in any case.

If any one occupies a house which stands donated as a Waqf without the permission of the mutawalli he will have compulsorily to pay the rental as damages.

The mutawalli may spend his money and material on Waqf property, if necessary, and have it reimbursed from Waqf funds and stores of the Waqf.

The mutawalli may purchase oil (for lighting), mats, bricks and cement for the flooring from the income of the Waqf, if the deed of Waqf permits it, for example, if it is stipulated in the deed of Waqf that the income may be spent in the interest of the Waqf and its needs. But if the income of the Waqf is stipulated to be spent on a specified item then it is not valid to spend it on any other item.

When the mutawalli does not know the details of the Waqf deed he should follow the conduct of his predecessor.

The mutawalli should borrow money for the Waqf unless it comes unavoidable. And, in that case too, he shall first obtain the permission of the Qadhi. Without the permission of the Qadhi he may not borrow any amount. He shall repay the loan from the income of the Waqf. If the waqf property is an agricultural land and seed is needed for sowing, he may borrow seed. Borrowing and taking loan is permissible only when the mutawalli does not have any amount with him (on Waqf account) and he should later repay it.

In case the mutawalli had some funds with him in Waqf account but he purchased something for the Waqf with his personal funds. It is permissible to get the amount reimbursed from the funds of the Waqf.

The mutawalli cannot mortgage the property of Waqf. If he does and mortgage occupies it, he shall have to pay rent at the rate current at that time.

The mutawalli spent some amount from Waqf funds on his personal needs and then spent an equal amount from his personal funds on the Waqf or deposited the amount in the Waqf funds. There is no penalty on him in such cases.

Supposing some funds are accumulated in the Waqf account. Some natural calamity, war or civil commotion the Muslims and money is needed for relief work. It should be examined whether those funds are immediately needed for the mosque or the Jama Masjid. If the funds are not immediately needed for the mosque the administrator is authorised to allow the Waqf funds to be given as loan for the relief work of Muslims.

If the Waqf is for the purposes and interest of the mosque it will be permissible for mutawalli to construct a portico at the gate in order to protect it against damage by rain. But if the Waqf is specially made for the construction and repair of the mosque then it will not be permissible to construct a portico out of the those funds. However Maulana Zaheeruddin (may God be please with him) says hat whether the Waqf is made for the construction of the mosque or for the purposes of the mosque both amount to the same and therefore it is permissible to construct a portico with Waqf funds.

THE POSITION AND CONDUCT OF MUTAWALLIS DURING THE PRESENT TIMES

It is necessary to say a few words here on the sad plight of Waqfs and the callousness with which the mutawallis are controlling and managing the Waqf properties. A donor creates a Waqf because he wants that the work for which he is creating the Waqf should be done smoothly and lack of funds may not hamper the progress of work. Specially in Waqf for a mosque the donor's intention is that the management of the mosque may be smooth, the mosque may be kept clean, it may have an atmosphere of peace where men may engage themselves in prayers comfortably. It is not his intention to throw away his money nor does he create a Waqf for the luxuries of the mutawalli. A mutawalli is appointed not for squandering away the funds. The mutawalli acquits himself of this responsibility only when he fulfills the conditions given in the Waqf deed. We see many Waqfs these days where the management has been confined to members of the donor's family although it is clearly stipulated in the Waqf deed that if any member of his family cannot manage waqf according to the conditions laid down by the donor, he should be removed.

In almost every waqf deed it is stipulated that the mutawalli should be adult, sane, trustworthy, honest and well wisher of the Waqf; that he should spend the income from Waqf carefully and protect the sources of income, and develop them. He is also warned to the displeasure of God in case he violates these conditions.

In spite of all this, it is distressing to see the callous disregard and willful defaults in maintenance of Waqf property and callous inattention towards its development and improvement which is generally prevailing everywhere. The mosques are generally not kept clean nor there is proper arrangement for lighting. The floor is in disrepair and walls are damaged. Water is not available for ablution and the Imam and Muazzin are not punctual. In spite of the stipulations in the waqf deed unworthy persons are appointed as Imams purely on considerations of low remuneration. How can an Imam lead his congregation when he himself is not well-versed in the knowledge of faith and the laws of Shariah.

The mutawalli should remember that he has to die one day and render an account of his conduct and character, that he has to answer for the defaults committed by him in the discharge of his duties. The default in the discharge of one's duties is a sin for which penalty will be served.

It is indeed a transgression for which Allah will award severe penalty, if proper accounts are not maintained and the expenses are not regulated according to the rules. Some mutawallis do not know what things are permissible and which items of expenditure one should avoid. To spend the income of Waqf on certain things merely for home and glamour, which do not serve the purpose of the Waqf at all, betrays a lack of sense of responsibility. This lack of sense of responsibility leads some people to mix up their personal income with the income of Waqf and to think that Waqf property is their personal property. A man of faith should fear the penalty of transgression and such irregularities and should perform his duties well or should rather give up his post.

In some mosques there are books which have been donated by some people. It is the duty of the mutawalli that he should preserve these well and not let them be damaged or spoiled by the readers; if it is stipulated in the Waqf deed he should lend these books to students. Someone should be appointed for the custody and preservation of these books and for their issue to interested readers and for receiving them back.

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